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FIRST THINGS

February 1991
Number 10

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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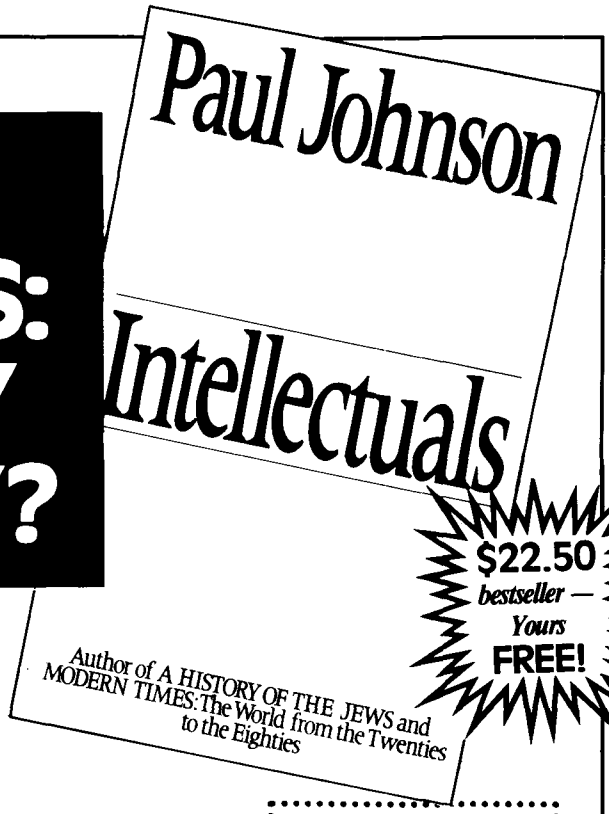

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A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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FIRST THINGS

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Racism, Old and New

OK, David Horowitz, I get your drift ("The Radical Paradigm and the New Racism," November 1990). I too wish that certain religious, academic, and media people would stop giving so much attention to the flake-left movements. I too think their proposals are more than merely wrong, that such actions would work direst evil on the people for whom the protestors claim to speak.

But take a good look: are you being any less polemical? "Left" this, "left" that, "left" *missabib* (Jeremiah 20:3,10). But they are definitely not all around. They're stuck in their own little orbits, far removed from real people's real daily decisions which are made based upon reasons dramatically different than those the "left" presumes. I *know*; I have to operate close-up to the little worlds of Baraka, Farrakhan, and Refuse and Resist. Every week. And I know these people that you castigate. The "minority group" people among them have one thing in common: they've been burned. They've felt the searing heat of what you term the "old" racism, either on themselves or on those they hold most dear. They know from bitter experience that "the system" sometimes works *against* justice (as all human systems sometimes do.) And they know it's *wrong*. Their experiences are so searing that they are blinded to the complexities and possibilities in a society with as many mini-centers of power as ours has. They're left not knowing true friend from true enemy, not trusting anyone.

How do you fight this "left," then? By wasting breath and print space lambasting their foolishness? No. You start by spending those breaths on the effort to end racism at personal and institutional levels. You fight this "left" by being a true friend to those burned by that racism and the poverty it creates. You fight it by recognizing that our nation will often have to go the extra mile for those who are victims of racism, and will have to turn the other cheek to those who lose themselves to their anger at injustice. You fight it by helping them find their just place in a society that is (contra Farrakhan) theirs in more ways than even the most aware of us can know. And you fight it by finding, and choking off, the racist in yourself.

Ultimately, our *real* enemy is still the new "old" racism, not the "left."

Bob Longman, Jr.
Sayville, NY

David Horowitz responds:

No, Bob Longman does not get my drift, which was that the new racism spawned by the left is not a defensive reaction to real racism in American

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society but an unappeasable aggression against America itself. The left is driven by a "motiveless malignity" in exactly the sense that Shakespeare used to describe Iago—the usurper. Its psychological roots are planted in resentments so deep and fed by hungers so insatiable that it is an exercise in futility even to attempt to plumb them.

Mr. Longman, nonetheless, tries: "They've been burned," he explains. Well, who hasn't? Ah, but "their experiences are so searing that they are blinded to the complexities and possibilities in a society with as many mini-centers of power as ours has."

Really? Leroi Jones, a.k.a. Imari Baraka, a man of minor talents and limited intelligence, has parlayed racist bravado and grievance-mongering into a five or six figure salary, a personal fiefdom at a prestigious university, and star status as cultural icon. If Mr. Longman were not so blinded by a patronizing attitude towards blacks, he would see that Baraka understands the "complexities and possibilities" of America's overly generous society better than he does.

Cults & Mind Control

Richard John Neuhaus castigates court action by those claiming to have been victimized by cults such as the Unification Church ("The Anti-Cult Business," The Public Square, November 1990). He asserts that judicial involvement in such cases necessarily entails improper regulation of religious belief and practice. And he may be right.

But it is disappointing that Neuhaus' article failed to acknowledge that there is such a thing as coercive mind control. There are many groups, of which the Unification Church is a notable example, who, as a matter of conscious and systematic policy, use techniques of deceptive mind control to recruit and mentally enslave vulnerable seekers. (If anyone doubts this, I would suggest he read *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, by Steven Hassan.)

Such evil practices deserve to be condemned by Mr. Neuhaus, who has forthrightly criticized a host of other activities that give religion a bad name. The practice of deceptive mind control may not call for judicial action, but it certainly calls for exposure, education, and support for non-coercive exit counseling (not forcible deprogramming).

Daniel Love Glazer
Chicago, IL

Religion and Homophobia

As a committed supporter of gay rights, I have to agree with part of your editorial, "The Uses of Homophobia" (November 1990). It is inaccurate and condescending to imply that all anti-gay feeling is based on fear; some of it is just plain bigotry, and ought to be called that.

Equally inaccurate is your characterization of Judaism and Christianity as univocally opposed to homosexuality. That may still be the majority view, but it is certainly not the only one. As early as 1964, in a pamphlet entitled, "Towards a Quaker View of Sex," British Friends stated that homosexuality is a natural state, no more to be condemned than left-handedness. More recently, Reform Jews have decided that homosexuality is no bar to ordination. Even within more conservative churches, there are voices speaking out for the view that homosexuality can be a moral, loving, and fulfilling way of life. James Nelson, among Lutherans, and Margaret Farley and Gregory Baum, among Roman Catholics, come immediately to mind.

For a fascinating discussion of parallels between Christian anti-Semitism and Christian prejudice against gays, I recommend John Boswell's "Jews, Bicycle Riders, and Gay People: The Determination of Social Consensus and Its Impact on Minorities," *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* (1989).

Dena S. Davis
Cleveland State University

Catholics & Evangelicals

I applaud Richard John Neuhaus' critique of the Catholic bishops' attitude toward Evangelicals in Latin America ("Christians vs. Christians," The Public Square, November 1990). As a Roman Catholic, I am ashamed.

Too often over the years we have heard our spiritual leaders, Catholic and Protestant, echo John's plaintive cry to Jesus: "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our company."

They seem deaf to Jesus' telling reply: "Do not try to stop him. No man who performs a miracle using my name can at the same time speak ill of me. Anyone who is not against us is with us" (Mark 9:38-40).

Evangelicals preach a radical commitment to Jesus Christ and the Word of God, an excellent beginning. While they lack the developed fullness of our Catholic theological heritage, the cultural result of our monopoly in Latin America for the last 450 years is less than impressive.

But their "converts' " lives reflect the very practical, sustained miracle of living out gospel values each day in an often hostile environment. This evidence strongly suggests they are not "against us" but "with us" in bringing Jesus to their neighborhoods and the world. Surely the bishops must see that.

Christian fellowship among men of different creeds, Jacques Maritain wrote (in his essay "Who Is My Neighbor?"), "is not fellowship of beliefs, but the fellowship of men who believe." This fellowship is based upon a transcendent fraternal love, he continues, which "does not go out to essences nor to qualities nor to ideas, but to persons; and it is the mystery of persons and of the divine presence within them which is here in play."

A simplistic and naive exegesis of Mark's Gospel? Perhaps, but fifty million Catholic charismatics worldwide have been living, working, and worshiping side by side with many stripes of Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, including those in Latin America, for more than twenty-five years.

The practical ecumenism of these renewal movements allows grassroots Christians to go beyond the

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truths and errors of particular dogma, and to recognize and respect, in faith, the divine spark of love in the other which makes us one in Christ.

Peter Etzell
Mankato, MN

Religion and Modernity

David Singer's "The Orthodox Jew as Intellectual Crank" (August/September 1990) especially impressed me because, although I am quite unfamiliar with Hebrew literature or contemporary Israeli culture, I was forcibly struck by many similarities with the debates over the relations between Christianity and modern secular culture in general. Much of the article's emotional weight comes from an amazement that any serious intellectual could argue for "the absolute rejection of modernity's key operative assumption: man as the center of value." For anyone not sharing that sense of amazement, the article's argument loses most of its capacity to convince.

So these two Orthodox Jews share "a religious problematic defined in rigidly [rigorously?] either/or terms"? Baruch Kurzweil holds that by placing man at the center, we moderns have paradoxically ended in diminishing humanness, not exalting it. Yet even within Israel that perspective is not confined to the Orthodox, let alone cranks. J. L. Talmon made a similar case. Outside Judaism, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac within Catholicism have offered a very similar critique of modernity. Amongst Protestants, on perhaps a less intellectually elevated plane, Francis Schaeffer has as well (also Oz Guiness from a younger generation). Where Christians *generally* (not *universally*—see for example some Dutch Calvinists) differ from Kurzweil is whether modernity is a *permanent* condition. Certainly the Protestant Evangelicals do not see the impact of modernity as permanent: conversion is possible.

As to Yeshayahu Leibowitz, the influence of Kierkegaard does indeed seem strong, as with quite a number of the Dane's Christian followers in this century. It is worth note that many Christians would make exactly the same comparison between Christ's sacrifice and that demanded of Abraham towards Isaac.

The most dubious part of the whole argument is the second proposition of "radical openness." Singer expects of Kurzweil a merely negative closure towards all modern culture (an attitude that can be found in some parts of American Fundamentalism). He is not prepared to see an active critical engagement with modernity. That "loving detail" is the scandal to Singer. But it is entirely possible to love the sinner while hating the sin.

Leibowitz is not alone in recognizing two quite different sorts of questions. In response to "how does it work?" he is prepared to accept "empiricist descriptions of reality." But in response to "what does it mean?" he looks for "normative direction" in Torah since "religious language is totally prescriptive." This is neither new nor cranky. One need only look at the relation between Ockhamist fideism and interest in science (see Frederick Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, volume 3, or more recently Umberto Ecco's novel, *The Name of the Rose*).

It may well be that both Kurzweil and Leibowitz profess an ultimate allegiance that negates the basic thrust of the modern experience. But that will only be alarming to those who considered "modern experience" to be a candidate for "ultimate allegiance." Many Christians are quite willing to put Gospel in place of Torah and regard it as "a timeless absolute that transcends the limitations of human history."

What Singer fails to consider is that "radical openness" is not necessarily acceptance. The fideist has made his "bargain" (to borrow Peter Berger's term) by insisting that faith need have no justification nor serve any purpose outside of God's revelation. In turn he fears those (like Aquinas or Scholem) who try to find a firm foundation for faith in a new pagan milieu—whether in Aristotle's pre-Christian philosophy or in modernity. Schaeffer for example was deeply suspicious of Aquinas' project and those of all his modern followers.

Certainly the views of Kurzweil and Leibowitz are "a coping mechanism" by which men of deep faith attempt to come to terms with a world that denies their faith. But they are not "forever unable to decide"; instead they have made a different sort of bargain. I am not convinced that "Kurzweil and Leibowitz feel drawn to and repulsed by modernity at one and the same time." They seem to me not "attracted" (i.e., "drawn" in that sense) to modernity. Rather they feel compelled to critique it; and even at times perhaps to pity those trapped inside it.

Peter A. Russell
Casselman, Ontario
Canada

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FIRST THINGS
FEBRUARY 1991

The Theses of Martin Luther King, Jr.

News stories of recent months underscore the fact that the place of Martin Luther King, Jr. in our national mythology is still not secure. Perhaps that should not surprise us. Myth-making in a nation so large and various as ours takes time. In that light, the twenty-three years since Dr. King's death is not a long time. It may not be bad that we are slow to elevate a historical figure to the status of national exemplar. When we so elevate a figure, we are saying something not only about that person but about ourselves. Among the many things that make us who we are, we are whom we admire and teach our children to emulate.

In 1983, Congress declared Martin Luther King Day to be a national holiday. Aside from the immediate effect of closing federal offices for a day, such an act of Congress is a recommendation, a statement of hope that people will agree that we recognize our better angels in the person and work of Dr. King. As with other national holidays, the observance of Dr. King Day is spotty. It has been a long time since national holidays were observed with any hint that they might be civil holy days. Just as well, some say, arguing that "civil religion" is a very dubious enterprise. Yes, but a society needs something like public piety—common symbols, stories, and rites that evoke respect, even reverence (although never worship).

Congress was right in what it did. It was not, as some claim, throwing a sop to black Americans; it was raising a sign for all Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr. advanced a thesis about America. A thesis is, first of all, a proposition. Dr. King proposed that legalized racial discrimination contradicted fundamental propositions of the American experiment. Of course he was not the first to say that. But he said it with an almost singular power of persuasion. And, beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956, he acted on it in a manner that would, in time, catch the conscience of the citizenry.

With remarkable, although not unfailing, consistency, he channeled anger into the ways of peaceful protest within the context of democratic deliberation. He made clear that his dream was a dream of and for America, not against America. He called us to be the people we professed to be. Most Americans listened to his thesis, and knew he was right. Some of those who view history in the light of providential purpose did not hesitate to acclaim him as God's instrument. Not since the Civil War had Americans been so compelled to face the most abiding sin of their corporate history. If one can speak of countries having souls, Dr. King led this country to something like repentance and amendment of life, or at least to nobler resolve.

Yet Dr. King and the day set aside to honor his memory remain, as they say, controversial. The reasons are not hard to find. We reject the claim that it is the only reason while readily acknowledging that one reason is racism. It is not only in the recognized fever swamps of extremism that one encounters Americans who never listened to Dr. King, or listened to him and strongly disagreed. They believe that blacks are inherently inferior and constitute a population basically alien to this society. In their view, laws of racial segregation were neither irrational nor unjust. Even if no other questions had subsequently been raised about Dr. King, these Americans would not honor his memory or celebrate his day. Racism may not be the main reason, but it is surely one reason, and it can in devious ways infect other reasons.

Many Americans are no doubt ambivalent about Dr. King because they are ambivalent about the current form of the civil rights movement that is associated with his name. Already in his lifetime, advocates of "black power" countered white racism with black racism, contending that blacks are indeed alien to an inherently oppressive "Amerika." Today, with significant gradations of stridency, many black leaders who claim the mantle of Dr. King perpetuate that poisonous line of unreason.

The very term "civil rights" has come to be understood not as a cause opening America to a larger and more generous sense of community but as a militantly fraudulent form of special pleading. Thus, for example, in the last Congress the Civil Rights Restoration Act was roundly, and rightly, criticized as the Racial Preference Act. The thesis of Dr. King has

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been turned into its antithesis. Most Americans do not take well to quotas and reverse discriminations designed to give additional advantage to those blacks who are already doing well. They are disgusted with racialist leaders who adamantly press for such measures while ignoring, denying, or excusing the desperate plight of an isolated black underclass, especially in our urban centers.

The racism of the right, against which Dr. King contended, is familiar. Not so readily recognized are the more recent manifestations of the racism of the left. Much pro-abortion agitation about the "crisis" of teenage pregnancy thinly veils a desire to control and, if possible, reduce the black population—especially the lower part of the population that may turn out to be a "drain" on society. The leaders of the public school establishment are determined to perpetuate a destructive educational system to which they would not subject their own children but which is good enough for "them." "Progressive" hiring and tenure policies in universities are based on the assumption that "they" cannot meet "our" standards, and therefore compromises must be made in the name of affirmative action.

These and other measures are advanced under the vague rubric of "civil rights." The result is the opposite of Dr. King's thesis that people should be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. The result is that many whites, and not a few blacks, are ambivalent about celebrating Dr. King because they, wrongly, identify him with a civil rights ideology that has made a mockery of the movement that he led.

Powerfully reinforcing these reservations are the questions raised about Dr. King's own character. That he was a philanderer, indulging himself in frequent adulterous relationships, now seems to be established beyond reasonable doubt. This aspect of his character was apparently well known to some who worked closely with him, and has become quite public in recent years. Now another thesis of Dr. King is being widely discussed, his doctoral thesis written at the School of Theology at Boston University. It seems that large sections of the thesis, and much of King's earlier and later writings, were "borrowed" from others without attribution. The unavoidable word for that is plagiarism.

The revelations about Dr. King's doctoral thesis do not touch his claim to historical greatness. While a few writers have contended that Dr. King was a scholar and theologian of note, this was generally recognized as hagiographical excess. Strangely enough, however, some among his more distinguished biographers have said that they are shaken by the finding of plagiarism. They were not similarly shaken by his sexual behavior. After all, many great men have been philanderers, but plagiarism is something else. Plagiarism is much more serious than adultery, that is, if your primary universe of discourse is the academy. Plagiarism is a knowledge-class sin. To understand this is to understand why Dr. King's plagiarism was so prominently featured in the prestige media in a way that his adulteries were not.

Some commentators took a different tack in response to the most recent findings. The *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, editorially opined that journalistic explorations into the private lives of public figures have gotten out of hand. The editors compared the attention paid the King disclosures with the exposés that undid Gary Hart, John Tower, and others in recent years. The comparison does not hold. At stake with Hart was his aspiration to be president, and the Tower question was whether he was qualified to be secretary of defense. At stake with Dr. King is whether he should be enshrined and celebrated as an exemplary figure in the telling of the American story. Moreover, the comparison does not hold because a doctoral thesis is not a private act. Perhaps most important, the comparison does not hold because Dr. King was a minister of the gospel.

The significance of the last point generally escapes those who have crafted the public telling of the King legend. A few days following his death in April 1968, a memorial service was held in New York at a large Harlem church. On network news, a reporter standing in front of the church concluded his report with this: "It was a religious service, and fittingly so, for, after all, Dr. King was the son of a minister." The son of a minister? Dr. King never left any doubt that he understood himself and his movement in terms of Christian teaching and ministry. The public secularization of the King legend has everything to do with the secularistic propensities of our cultural elites. Yet another factor is at work, however.

Even some of those who recognize that Dr. King cannot be explained apart from his religious milieu and self-understanding seem to think that the usual standards for clerical behavior do not apply to the black church. Compare, for instance, the sensationalistic media treatment of white televangelists caught in sexual dalliance. Long and lasciviously, the media slaver over the manifest "hypocrisy" of a Jimmy Swaggart. Dr. King's sexual derelictions, on the other hand, are discreetly ignored, or even welcomed as evidence that he was not one of those awkward types derisively referred to as "saints." (The last was the relieved observation of *The Nation* in response to the King exposures.)

Why this nonchalance toward Dr. King's moral transgressions? One answer is that Dr. King was on the right side of a great and just cause. Another and less attractive answer is the supposition that we shouldn't expect as much of blacks. The people who are accepting of Dr. King's moral failings are, as often as not, the same people who tell us that black rap groups that draw their language from the sewer are "representative of authentic black culture." The

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"acceptance" professed by so many of a progressive bent is, in fact, a condescension riddled through and through with racialist stereotypes.

The truth is that for millions of Christians, black and white, there is the perception that Dr. King betrayed their trust. If he is to be accused of hypocrisy, however, it was the hypocrisy defined as the homage that vice pays to virtue. Unlike so many others in the sixties, he did not commend his failings as an "alternative lifestyle." He knew that he was a sinner, and we can hope that he knew he was a forgiven sinner.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is rightly honored as a hero in the telling of the American story—not because of his personal virtue but because he was the chosen instrument to advance a morally imperative change in our common life. His character was grievously flawed. He was, to borrow from Saint Paul, an "earthen vessel"—a very earthen vessel. For believers this only underscores the truth that, as the Apostle says, "the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." We have little doubt that Dr. King would agree with that. And we have little doubt that he would further agree that the thesis he sought to advance needs still to be championed today—against those who opposed him then, as well as against those who fraudulently claim his legacy now. Dr. King, we expect, would not be at all surprised that he and his thesis continue to be cause for controversy.

Opinion

A Government for Real People

John Strietelmeier

As a geographer, I learned years ago that my fellow countrymen are not only uninformed about the location of places and things; they are uninterested and, indeed, resentful when someone suggests that it might be helpful for them to know where in the world they are.

It took last year's budget negotiations, however, to make me realize that my fellow countrymen are even more uninformed on the workings of democratic government than they are on geography. How else can we explain the anger and impatience which the bare-knuckle, free-wheeling, down-to-the-wire haggling produced in so many ordinarily reasonable and responsible citizens?

I found the whole business reassuring. General Washington, who deplored the idea of political parties, might disagree with me. But little Jamie Madison, if he has any way of looking down on the country whose Constitution he did so much to form, must have been beside himself with delight. Things worked out just the way they were supposed to in a representative democracy in which power is divided and limited.

Under any of the various forms of despotism, whether benevolent or nasty, the budget process is neat, clean, and orderly. The ruler decides what he wants to do in the coming fiscal year, calculates how much money he needs to do it, gives some thought to how much he can get away with in the form of higher taxes without provoking a popular uprising, and then makes his decision, sometimes with the formal approval of some sort of parliament, sometimes on his own by decree.

Under the parliamentary system, the process is usually neat and clean, although not always orderly. Once the Prime Minister and his or her colleagues in the ministry work out a budget, it has to be submitted to Parliament for approval, but in practice Parliament's powers are limited to either approving the Government's recommendations or disapproving them and, in the process, voting the Government out of office—which means voting themselves out of office, too, since the Government will almost certainly call new elections. The debates over the budget can, of course, become quite heated and, for those who enjoy the ambience of a disorderly classroom, quite a lot of fun.

The Constitution under which we Americans are governed provides for neither a despotism nor a parliamentary democracy, although the political realities at any given time may cause our system to take on the superficial appearance of one or another of these systems.

The key to understanding our system, it seems to me, is that it can be—and historically has been—run by politicians rather than statesmen.

Statesmen, in the sense of the term as I am using it, are people of good background and education who have picked up certain ideals and standards that commend them to the trust and confidence of other people. Often they come from "good families" that have contributed generation after generation to the welfare of their country. There are never enough statesmen to staff any government.

Politicians, as I am using the term, are a rather different breed. We don't trust them, partly because we don't know much about them or their families or their ancestors. However lofty the office they occupy—President or Congressman, Governor or State Senator, Mayor or Councilman—they all look mighty suspicious to us, and we are not about to give them absolute power to decide anything. Political scientists call our system of preventing anybody from having

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the final say "checks and balances." The folk wisdom out of which that arrangement arose is a proverb: "Set a thief to catch a thief." We know that the great majority of our politicians are no more thievish than we are, but since we don't know who are the thieves and whom we can trust, we treat them all as potential thieves—which, of course, we all are, given the right temptation.

Some of my friends got bent pretty far out of shape during the budget negotiations because, thanks largely to cable television, they got their first and very shocking close-up look at how decisions are made in those shimmeringly white palaces at either end of Pennsylvania Avenue. They saw their national leaders compromising on what seemed matters of principle, breaking promises freely given, threatening reprisals and offering favors to influence voting, using language to disguise rather than to clarify meaning, appealing to prejudices and selfish interests.

I thought it was great. If we are to have government, let it be government for men and women as they really are. There is no democracy either in heaven or in hell. But here on earth, suspended between the two, are we—saints and sinners, dreaming of voyages to the stars while fiddling our expense accounts.

It was for real people like us that the Constitution of the United States was tailored. It is not a cynical document that prescribes government by knaves or fools, but neither is it an idealistic document that assumes any such nonsense as the natural goodness of man.

It is assumed that we shall be governed by men and women very much like ourselves—whose representatives, after all, they are supposed to be. We disapprove of deals, but we want our representatives to cut the best one they can get for us. We hate taxes, but we know that somebody has to pay them and we hope our man can shift them onto someone other than ourselves. We want and increasingly need services that only government is equipped to supply, but we want our representative to try his darnedest to stick somebody else with the bill. And with the deficit, annual and accumulated, as bad as it is, we really don't want to know all of the horrible truth.

In such a moral morass, statesmen tend to get the vapors. So thank God for the politicians who can move in, do what needs to be done, and get things moving again in a direction minimally acceptable to all of us. It may not be much, but it is more than can be accomplished under most systems of government.

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The Do-It-Yourself Catholic Kiddie-Kism*

Paul V. Mankowski

Q. Who made you?
A. (Melissa Murphy, Age 10):

Who *makes* me you should say!
I co-creates me ev'ry day.
My tender psyche I unlocks
& with my mental pencil box
I brightly crayons, without fault,
My very very own gestalt
& so I comes to be alert
To all my pain & all my hurt
& then when sister gives the nod
I starts my angering—at god.

Q. Who is God?
A. (Megan Kowalewski, Grade 3):

Our teachers, our sitters, our helpers, our mothers,
Our partners and pals and Significant Others,
The people who work in the Caring Professions,
The service that pays for my therapy sessions,
The Muppets and Smurfs and *of course* Mr. Rogers,
The U.S.C.C. and Los Angeles Dodgers,
The lady who serves as our story-time reader
(At present) the Senate Majority Leader,
Delores in day-care, Ms. Sands in ceramics,
Francesca who networks my fam'ly dynamics,
Picasso and Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion
And Ronald McDonald and Richard McBrien,
Miss Piggy and Kermit and Bozo and Bartok,
Corita and Gloria Steinem and Starhawk,
And Rudolf the Reindeer and Santa's ten elves
But best of all most of all, god is our *selves*!

Q. Well . . . yes . . . uh . . . *why* did God make you?
A. (Scott Rodriguez-Dorff, Age 9):

I'd never lend personal credence
God's serpents, god's fruit-trees, god's Edens,
  Were it not that god tried
  In god's way to provide
God's pronouns with god's antecedents.

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Abortion Politics

Dave Andrusko

A funny thing happened on the way to last November's elections. Pundits who throughout the summer had billed the elections as the first post-*Webster* "referendum on abortion" increasingly argued, as fall rolled around, that abortion had "faded" as a decisive issue for voters.

Some of this re-evaluation can be attributed to the media's commendable practice of gradually correcting themselves when they go overboard. And as the elections approached, surely any analysis that failed to give proper weight to the budget controversy's potentially decisive effect on the outcome would have been woefully inadequate.

But the suspicion runs deep that the primary reason for minimizing the importance of the abortion issue is that many in the media had come to the conclusion that anti-abortionists were going to do far better than advertised. The elections were not running according to script.

For nearly a year, a clear consensus on the abortion issue prevailed among all but a handful of those who regularly write on politics. When the Supreme Court in its July 3, 1989 *Webster* decision signalled that the justices would no longer instinctively reject state anti-abortion legislation, the conventional wisdom held that *Webster* had sent a wake-up call to long dormant pro-abortion forces. Indeed, reporters misread the victories of pro-abortionists in the 1989 gubernatorial campaigns in New Jersey and Virginia to "prove" that the "sleeping pro-choice giant" had been so thoroughly aroused that no anti-abortion incumbent was safe from her wrath.

Overnight, political commentators became so enthralled with "choice" as the political Rosetta stone that they missed the genuinely salient particulars: that one of the two anti-abortion candidates (Jim Courter in New Jersey) completely "flip-flopped"—embraced what he thought was a winning "pro-choice" position—while the other (Marshall Coleman in Virginia) bungled the issue altogether by largely ignoring his opponent's ferocious attacks in the vain hope that the abortion issue would go away. Surely the more likely message of these campaigns was that rank hypocrisy never sells and that hiding one's anti-abortion credentials guarantees that such a candidate absorbs all the negatives for his or her position while acquiring none of the positives.

Thus, until the June 1990 California primaries, most reporters and columnists took as gospel the famous threat of Kate Michelman, executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL): "Take our rights, lose your jobs." However, on June 5, when anti-abortion played a major role, the truth finally began to sink in: anti-abortion forces had more than held their own in all the special state and federal elections post-*Webster*, and were now doing quite well in the 1990 primary season leading up to the general election.

Second thoughts about the pro-abortion juggernaut were so pervasive that even before the dust settled, the post-election storyline was that the November elections had been a draw: both sides of the abortion issue could point to their victories in important races. While such a conclusion is a far cry from the usual media portrait of unambiguous anti-abortion ruin, the reality is that anti-abortion forces had done quite well and had come tantalizingly close to their best results since 1980, when they made a net gain of ten seats in the U.S. Senate.

For example, NARAL's No.1 and No.2 targets were Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Republican state representative Steve Freind of Pennsylvania. Helms' 54-46 percent victory is by any standard extraordinary. Not only did the organized pro-abortion forces pour millions into the campaign to elect Harvey Gantt, but the Hollywood and arts communitites left no mud unslung in their extravagant attacks on Helms for his role in the contentious debate over federal funding of controversial "art." Meanwhile, Freind, who had angered a number of major power blocs in Pennsylvania for other reasons, overcame an extremely well-financed pro-abortion challenger 52-48 percent, in a race where expenditures ran ten times beyond the ordinary.

There were other major results on November 6, the significance of which was completely lost. At least two prevailing political dogmas were shattered.

We were told, first, that the ultimate "magic bullet" had been discovered: pro-abortion Republican women could combine the rising sentiment to elect women to office with what was supposed to be their ability to persuade Democratic women to cross over and vote for them based on their support for abortion. As it turned out, however, all three female pro-abortion congresswomen who ran for Senate seats failed, as did the most visible gubernatorial candidate, Barbara Hafer in Pennsylvania.

The three congresswomen lost to pro-abortion men. Hafer was buried by an anti-abortion male, Gov. Bob Casey. In all cases, the magic bullet had proven to be a blank.

We were also led to believe that it was shrewd politics for those who had publicly held anti-abortion views to abandon them. Interestingly, the press quietly avoided discussing the fate of flip-floppers. They lost in Ohio, Kansas, Maine, and New Hampshire, in two instances by a whopping two-to-one margin.

In addition, there was no gainsaying that anti-abortion forces won a major victory in Michigan, where Republican John Engler upset incumbent pro-abortion Democratic Gov. James Blanchard. Adding to the impact was that all the major leadership positions in both parties in the state legislature remained in the hands of anti-abortionists. Another

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vocally anti-abortion gubernatorial candidate, Walter Hickel, also bested two pro-abortion candidates to win in Alaska.

Finally, when anti-abortionists did lose, for the most part it was clearly for reasons unrelated to abortion. (The same, it is fair to note, happened on occasion in reverse as well.) Unlike the case in the state legislatures, which are crowded with anti-abortion Democrats, in Congress most anti-abortionists are Republicans. They suffered greatly from the tax and budget controversies that cropped up in the last few weeks of the campaign. Their defeats resulted in a modest anti-abortion net loss of two in the Senate and eight in the House.

Sadly, heavily favored anti-abortion candidates for governor in Minnesota and Texas lost as a fall-out from matters completely unrelated to abortion. Had both prevailed, a good night would have become an overpowering victory for anti-abortionists.

In sum, three great conventional wisdoms of 1990 concerning abortion were that anti-abortionists were on the ropes, that flip-floppery would pay off, and that the ultimate political candidate was the pro-abortion Republican woman. All proved dead wrong.

However, there are several other lessons from these off-year elections that can tell us a lot about what we can expect in the months and years to come.

For starters, we must remember that if given any chance at all, political reporters will treat even the most meager evidence as conclusive proof that the anti-abortion movement is in terminal decline. If there ever was any real doubt concerning media bias on this issue, it was dispelled not only by the tunnel-visioned coverage of post-*Webster* abortion politics, but also by media critic David Shaw's historic four-part series "Abortion and the Media" in the *Los Angeles Times*. Reporters are overwhelmingly pro-abortion and, as Shaw demonstrates, that results in biased coverage, partly because of the personal affinity of the media for one side, and partly because the pro-abortionists are master publicists.

The second lesson of the election is that anti-abortion candidates who embraced their position rather than trying to hide from it often won, even against overwhelming odds. Engler in Michigan was one. Joan Finney, an anti-abortion female Democrat, was another. Finney defeated incumbent Kansas Gov. Mike Hayden, another flip-flopper.

Third, if there is no end in sight to the abortion issue politically—if the two sides will continue to slug it out in Congress and state legislatures for the foreseeable future—then we can expect even more attention to anything that promises to circumvent the political process. Enter the French abortion pill RU 486 and the incredible media attention surrounding it. This abortifacient is regularly presented as something akin to a woman taking an aspirin in the privacy of her home—safe, effective, and not subject to noisy anti-abortionists demonstrating at abortion clinics.

Ironically, at the same time the propaganda machine began to grind out a new myth—that there are "therapeutic" uses for RU 486—the first independent studies were showing that this powerful artificial steroid is far more dangerous to women than surgical abortions, less "successful" and not at all more private. (A woman will usually come to the abortionist four times; unlike the case with a surgical abortion, the woman also does not know precisely when her now-dead baby will be expelled.)

Finally, if electoral politics and RU 486 hold out no promise to short-circuit the ferocious abortion debate, we can also expect to see even more attempts by pro-abortionists to co-opt major institutions currently neutral on abortion. Two recent examples are illustrative. In February, the American Bar Association adopted an abortion-on-demand resolution only to rescind it six months later in the wake of a tremendous backlash. Likewise the powerful AFL-CIO appeared certain to pass a pro-abortion resolution in early 1990. However, by late summer, the Federation reaffirmed its traditional neutrality as a direct result of tens of thousands of angry letters sent by members who insisted that abortion was not a union issue.

The politics of abortion will continue to be played out in a host of arenas. For some, who see abortion as "merely" a cultural issue, this is much too much ado about nothing. But as William Bennett observed in a recent speech, "We need to have a calm, complete, and honest talk about moral principles and about some of the most troubling aspects of contemporary American culture." What could be more worthwhile than an honest dialogue over that troublesome but most fundamental of questions: how do we define the human community for which we accept collective responsibility?

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The Things that Remain: An Episcopalian's Credo

Paul Zahl

Fifteen years ordained and still serving in the parish. Still switching on the coffee at dawn Sunday mornings, still putting out the chairs for midweek

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Bible study, still riding with the youth group on ski trips. Still visiting at the hospital, still living with difficult people on the Vestry, still looking up the right page for the Collect of the Day, Sunday after Sunday after Sunday.

But is there still fire in my belly? Am I still hooked on the Word? Have I gotten deeper or holier? Or have I started to mark time, shunning controversy and fleeing confrontation?

This reflection takes the temperature of one who aspires to the description "Evangelical," yet serves within a denomination where the word carries mixed associations. I have worked entirely within the Episcopal Church, within a traditional set-up of parochial ministry.

The key question is this: What do I still believe? For surely, theology determines ministry. If one's convictions change, everything changes. If one's convictions hold, the ministry, though always under stress and strain, will endure.

The first fact is conversion, in 1973, through the ministry of FOCUS (Fellowship of Christians in Universities and Schools). Within three months I was transported (not as to New South Wales but as to Narnia) to St. John's College, Nottingham, an Evangelical seminary of the Church of England.

During two happy, growing years at St. John's, I was married to my chief supporter and love, Mary, and we have had three sons. The training at St. John's, in bright contrast to the American scene I had fled, was biblical (unlike anything I had seen or heard of in the Church I knew), serious, and most important at the time, pastoral. These English Evangelicals took a newly converted, frankly confused American, and loved him. They listened to him and quieted him. But they did not quiet the "one thing needful." That one thing, zeal for Christ, they tended and fanned.

Then came a rough landing, deacon's year in my sponsoring diocese back home. From Evangelical and charismatic Anglicanism to latitudinarian and psychologizing Episcopalianism. The Church in which I had grown up seemed to have an allergy to passionately felt Christianity.

Thus Mary and I felt rescued when we were invited to join the staff of Grace Church, New York City, by FitzSimons Allison, who was then Rector there and who himself had been a lonely voice in the Episcopal seminaries.

Six years in New York involved in an Evangelical ministry we can never forget. Six years of pastoral evangelism that witnessed lives changed and the church built up. And I was changed. The heat in the kitchen proved hot indeed, and at one point I almost burned out. Yet I was taught an empathy of depression and fearfulness, of bondage and despairing. A new ministry, from pain to pain, emerged.

Then a brick wall came down: the crisis of clergy deployment in the Episcopal Church. The surface problem was, and is, too many clergy for a shrinking number of parishes. The deeper problem is a cottage industry of consultants, deployment officers, and computer systems that overwhelms the former givens of call, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. The root problem is an erosion of confidence in God to renew the Church.

The result for us was no way out, on an ocean of "process." Eventually a call did come, to rebuild an ancient parish in Westchester County, just outside New York. Here was a church that walked with Jacob's limp, while being ironically encircled with the emerald fields of a worldly paradise.

Then followed six and a half more years of pastoral evangelism. The end result? A vital church family, beamed down by the effect of God's Word as a sort of fifth column in that land of cool exteriors and quiet despair.

Then a second phase of hand-wringing: the "big job" never came. On occasion when it beckoned, the calls eventually went to those of different theology and intention.

Now a new chapter, the chapter of the present, rectorship in South Carolina, where the Church seems almost too strong institutionally for its own spiritual good. The foundations are deep, but it is hard to know whether the quicklime is grace or law. This is ministry in Christendom.

Is there still an animating grace to it? Do I still believe as I did "when first I saw the Lord"?

The governing principle behind this reflection on fifteen years of ministry is that ideas make the man. Persevering in ministry depends on theology. If I lose my faith, then the spring for parish work comes unwound. Either I will find a new spring, or I will stop. I have been burned out and I know despair. But there are things that remain.

First of all, Jesus of Nazareth remains the most absorbing, appealing, and merciful figure in the history of the world. From Harvard years, when the lovingkindness of the man leapt out from Scripture at otherwise desultory church services, to conversion and ministry right through to this moment: Jesus of Nazareth is the person from whom I cannot get away, from whose spell, once cast, it seems impossible to escape. "He came not to destroy men but to save them." This holds up as the central truth of life.

Secondly, original sin, for all its dark associations, is surely the "one empirically verifiable Christian doctrine." Call it by any other name, original sin is accurate description for our universal human contrariness and psycho-genetic inwardness. The Anglican Church's Thirty-Nine Articles get it right: "Original sin . . . is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man . . . whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness. . . . And that infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated" (Article IX). Fifteen years of parish ministry have made this

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parson no less Pauline, no less Augustinian, no less a believer in the common prayer of every person for a Savior, than he has ever been.

Thirdly, the accounts in the Gospels of Jesus' death and resurrection carry as much the precious air of remembered events as they ever have. If these two events, or either one of them, did not happen, in something like the form in which they are reported, then I want to know. Would I have the courage, if they were not true, to withdraw my allegiance and "look for another"?

But every time I return to the old stories in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they positively live with remembered truth. They bear the stamp of reminiscence. Jesus suffered a criminal's sentence, his body rose from death, and he was seen by many.

Fourthly, the atonement, as model or interpretation for what happened on the cross, holds for its profundity. It holds for its "one, full, perfect, and sufficient" success in accomplishing that which I try unsuccessfully to accomplish every day of my life, which is the conquest of guilt. We are just simply so human, as Harry Stack Sullivan used to say, and we live our lives beneath the Damocles sword of accusation. Our instinct is to ward off judgment: judgment from parents, judgment from children, judgment from peers, the judgment of the world. How telling, then, and persuasive to hear that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

What I need is cleansing, and the being forgiven. Every day I wake up, I need the being forgiven.

Moreover, the atonement has to be substitutionary, to use the classic language, or I fail to see how it can ensure the being forgiven. We need God's substituting Himself into our frail, contingent world of judged living. We require a substitute, the deepest form of empathy, the "I'll go in your place" quality of advocacy. The metaphor of God's substitution is the only one of the familiar theories of atonement that provides for the full failed weight of human aspiration.

Moreover, substitutionary atonement has to be imputed. Imputation means the regarding as righteous of one who is not intrinsically righteous at all. It covers over the conflicted ambivalent character of human personality with a seamless robe, and gives us authentic security in the encounter with God.

Imputation is described tersely and truly by an English historian of the Reformation, Patrick Collinson: "[It is] a transaction somewhat like a marriage, in which Christ the bridegroom takes to himself an impoverished and wretched harlot and confers upon her all the riches that are His. . . . Therefore, the justified Christian man, in himself and of his own nature a sinner but not seen as a sinner by God, brings forth those good works which consist in the love of God and neighbor, not slavishly to win any reward but gladly, that service which is perfect freedom." Imputation as an experienced principle is poignantly needful for a striving world.

This fourth personal conviction, of atonement, is summed up in the experience of grace. Grace is imputed in full on the basis of and as a result of the substitutionary atonement of Christ crucified for my original sin and that of the whole world. This is the exact theological heart of the matter.

The weight I place on the substitutionary atonement in my ministry and personal experience of life is full and has not shifted one inch.

There are two further articles of faith that remain intensely, personally important to this ministry fifteen years out. One is the practical dynamic of grace in "love and work" (*zu Lieben und zu Arbeiten*, Freud's terse summary of what makes for a human life), which is today: Motivation in love and work springs from prior love. Pastorally and in daily living, people do not love, in any heartfelt way, unless and until they have first been loved. "We love because He first loved us."

Grace, the prior love, the "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" part, is the ground floor for all persisting love and achievement.

A final article of faith that has persisted in its radicality and essential unreconstructedness is less an article of faith than an attitude. I refer to the Protestant character of my faith. I hope to finish out my ministry as an explicit Protestant, even so within the Catholic Church, which is the historically continuous orthodox society of Christian believers.

By Protestant I mean a version of Christianity that recognizes no curtain or veil between God and man save my sin and his perfect goodness. By Protestant I mean a version of Christianity that focuses utterly on the unmediated need of us and the unmediated response of God. By Protestant I mean an impatience with anything that is secondary to this, anything that gets in the way of our overwhelming hunger for grace and his overriding desire to feed us.

Fifteen years out: six cardinal points of faith, one man's sketch of Christian believing. I offer thanks for a retention of confidence in "the things that remain."

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God's Spy: Malcolm Muggeridge, 1903-1990

M. D. Aeschliman

In the course of a very long life, Malcolm Muggeridge made many enemies, but he surely made more friends, among whom it is one of the great pleasures of my life to have been included. His enemies could be found both to the left and to the right. Those on the left are easy to account for: by temperament, upbringing, family connections, and early employment a man of the left, he was a renegade and dogged critic of the left after his own journalistic experiences in the Soviet workers' paradise lost in 1932-33. Yet enemies or antagonists to his right, both in England and America, were also never hard to find. He thought the English monarchy and aristocracy a sorry, self-serving farce, and though he considered American capitalism the lesser of available evils in the world, he never thought very highly of what he called the "first Church of Christ capitalist."

In fact Malcolm was the archetypal outsider, a peripatetic and restless individualist one of whose favorite sayings was *rien n'est beau que le vrai*—nothing is beautiful but the true. This creed is not designed to win friends in positions of power, and Malcolm's caustic, witty tongue and pen commanded an irony that will always make potentates aware of just how threadbare their garments of intelligence and integrity really are. "Honesty is praised, and left to shiver," wrote Juvenal long ago, and Malcolm knew to his pain and loss what this could mean, suffering periods of poverty and enforced separation from his beloved family in search of employment adequate to his gifts.

Yet it is the universal testimony of his friends and acquaintances that he was never, or very rarely, the gloomy, outcast prophet. None of my acquaintances has had more gaiety or good cheer or a sharper or more bracing sense of humor. Walks with Malcolm—and he loved to walk, around London, around the East Sussex countryside near his home—were always a feast of wit and laughter. I have never met a better, or a wiser, talker. His sense of the absurd was sharp, intense, and immediate, carried on a conversational wave of hilarious exuberance. Yet it was never demoralizing or cynical; the burden of Malcolm's wit, like that of the medieval and Renaissance Christian fools about whom he loved to discourse, as in Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* or Shakespeare's *King Lear*, was always, implicitly or explicitly, that we were *all* fools in need of laughter, forgiveness, and grace. He was no gloomy "absurdist," and thought Beckett, Pinter, and Plath derisory and degenerate.

I vividly remember that on one occasion in the late 1970s when I was walking with Malcolm in the East Sussex countryside, he started talking about the emergence of aesthetic nihilism in modern life and literature, a phenomenon that he identified with the Bloomsbury writers, whom (except for Leonard Woolf) he particularly loathed. He described a conversation he had had after George Orwell's death with Cyril Connolly, the writer-editor-aesthete who had been with Orwell at prep school and then at Eton. Why, Malcolm asked Connolly, had their mutual friend Orwell become such a passionate and sincere, even puritanical, moralist, when so many of his contemporaries at school had become aesthetes, homosexuals, Communists, or all three at once? "Well, you see," Connolly replied laconically, "George was not a *pretty boy*." The fecklessness of this, especially coming from the overweight and unattractive Connolly, Malcolm took to be characteristic of a civilization in complete collapse, which he supposed his to be, however eagerly he kept on the lookout for signs to the contrary.

Malcolm insisted that he always loved truth—*rien n'est beau que le vrai*—but he decided that "truth itself . . . is in decidedly bad taste." Thus a tremendous appeal was exercised on him by the great Christian outsiders—Pascal, Bunyan, Blake, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Simone Weil. Though he became a Catholic late in life, he was, I think, in theological terms what one would call a "skeptical fideist": temperamentally and through wide experience a skeptic, his skepticism took the form of an incapacity to believe in all merely *human* authority or power. Yet the criterion by which he found earthly authorities almost always ludicrous, fraudulent, or corrupt was the criterion by which he found "the string from the golden ball, which led to Jerusalem's wall." He did not find Mother Teresa derisory or deficient.

Far from being the "agile nihilist" that an irritated and irreligious critic once called him, Malcolm was the witness as wit. If sanity survives our outrageous century, his courageous and antiseptic pen will deserve some of the credit. To use a phrase he loved from that fifth Gospel, *King Lear*, he "took upon himself the mystery of things, and served as God's spy."

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Mortality: The Measure of Our Days

Gilbert Meilaender

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;
Ripeness is all.
—King Lear

For much of human history death was associated at least as much with infancy and youth as with old age. To live to be old was an achievement—a modest victory over death, and one often thought of in religious terms as a blessing.

In our time, however, when death and old age so often go hand in hand, to grow old becomes cause for fear and worry, not for rejoicing. But this suggests that our deepest problem is not that we grow old. It is, rather, that we die. In some ways we might even say that the preoccupation of our culture with the different stages of life and with growing old is simply one more mechanism for the "denial of death." Harold Moody has written that the idea of life-span development, given us by psychology, is "the great and indispensable myth of our time." Indispensable, because it gives us a way of trying to see our life whole and entire, as significant and meaningful. But also a great myth, needed to help us build a dike that holds back recognition of our mortality. It is not easy to say with the psalmist:

> Lord, let me know my end,
> and what is the measure of my days;
> let me know how fleeting my life is!

Yet, acquiring such knowledge is the fundamental task of each of us.

To think about our death means also, of course, to think about our life—what it means to be a human being, what sort of nature and life we share. To be sure, these are large themes, and they have been treated by many authors in many books. By considering just three of the most profound of these books, we can begin to see the range of possible attitudes toward death.

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I

In *Charlotte's Web,* by E. B. White, we read of one who dies alone, but who also lives on in her offspring. Charlotte is an exceptional spider whose affection as a friend and talent as a writer have saved the pig Wilbur from becoming ham and pork chops. Wilbur has even been judged a prize pig at the Fair. But when the Fair is over and preparations are being made to return Wilbur to the Zuckerman's farm, Charlotte tells him that she will not be returning with him. Having created her masterpiece, her egg sac with 514 eggs, she knows that her strength is spent and that she will soon die. Panic-stricken at the news, Wilbur manages at least to take the egg sac back with him, carrying it in his mouth on the journey home.

As Wilbur is loaded for the return trip, Charlotte whispers good-bye, content in the knowledge that her children are safe.

> She never moved again. Next day, as the Ferris wheel was being taken apart and the race horses were being loaded into vans and the entertainers were packing up their belongings and driving away in their trailers, Charlotte died. The Fair Grounds were soon deserted. The sheds and buildings were empty and forlorn. . . . No one was with her when she died.

In this description of Charlotte's death, we do not fail to hear the loneliness, the sadness, and the drabness of death. What is there in the story for us to set against these terrors? Two things chiefly. First, there is friendship. When Wilbur wonders why Charlotte has done so much for him, spinning the webs whose

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messages garnered for him the reputation as a prize pig, Charlotte responds by pointing to the reciprocal benefits of their friendship.

> "You have been my friend," replied Charlotte. "That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my webs for you because I liked you. After all, what's a life anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle."

If we read this as more than a book about spiders and pigs, we can detect here a vision that might be called Aristotelian. Caught up in the messiness of life, in search of a brief flourishing before we are replaced by others essentially like us, we are most ourselves when united in a bond of friendship. Together we take the measure of our days, and in so doing, we achieve a certain nobility.

More than that should not be asked, since the cycle of nature is greater than we are, and in its own way it offers us a chance of victory over mortality. Charlotte tells Wilbur:

> "These autumn days will shorten and grow cold. The leaves will shake loose from the trees and fall. Christmas will come, then the snows of winter. You will live to enjoy the beauty of the frozen world. . . . Winter will pass, the days will lengthen, the ice will melt in the pasture pond. The song sparrow will return and sing, the frogs will awake, the warm wind will blow again. All these sights and sounds and smells will be yours to enjoy, Wilbur—this lovely world, these precious days. . . ."

Wilbur has been saved from a premature death at the butcher's hands—not that he may never die, but that he may live out his life in full as Charlotte has. And Charlotte, in turn, lives on in her children. Wilbur has taken the egg sac back with him, and one fine spring morning the little spiders begin to crawl out. In a few days there comes a "warm draft of rising air" that carries off one after another of the young spiders. In despair at losing Charlotte's children, Wilbur cries himself to sleep. But when he wakes, he discovers that three of Charlotte's daughters have stayed behind to live in the barn and be his friends. Although Wilbur always remembers Charlotte with special love, he is greatly pleased with his new companions. Charlotte has not herself survived, but her life has pointed beyond life itself through the continuation of the species. Her willingness to wither and die has given rise to the next generation.

There are, however, other ways to face death, and *Charlotte's Web* is not the only child's book that will bear many readings. Another is Felix Salten's *Bambi*—translated into English by Whittaker Chambers and described in John Galsworthy's Foreword as "a little masterpiece." If E. B. White was our Aristotle, it would not be far from the mark to think of Salten as our Seneca or Marcus Aurelius.

The story of Bambi is really about one thing: The young deer Bambi is gradually taught by the old stag how to live wisely, and much of what he learns has to do with death. Bambi and his mother take a walk, he sees the ferret kill a mouse, and his mother has no answer when he asks, "Why?" He learns that they can play in the meadow safely only after dark. And he learns from inanimate nature as the leaves begin slowly to fall from the trees.

Gradually, Bambi's mother leaves him alone more and more. Missing her, he wanders through the forest calling her name. On one such occasion he encounters the old stag for the first time. "What are you crying about?" asks the old stag. "Can't you stay by yourself?" And, indeed, this is the essence of the wisdom passed on to Bambi by the old stag: that he must "act bravely" and, still more, that he must live alone.

> When he was still a child the old stag had taught him that you must live alone. Then and afterwards the old stag had revealed much wisdom and many secrets to him. But of all his teachings this had been the most important; you must live alone, if you wanted to preserve yourself, if you understood existence, if you wanted to attain wisdom, you had to live alone.

The ordinary emotional ties that bind one to another, however sweetly they may draw us, are dangerous. Drawn by them, we cease to live within ourselves and we become vulnerable. One day, Bambi thinks he hears his beloved Faline calling him, and, overcome with desire to be near her, he begins running toward the voice. Suddenly the old stag is there, barring his way. Frantic to see Faline, Bambi tries to persuade the old stag to let him go to her, but the old stag insists that "she isn't calling" and "it isn't she." But Bambi must go, and so the old stag leads him cautiously by a roundabout way until, from the safety of cover, Bambi sees a hunter imitating Faline's call. The lesson is a clear one, even if painful to learn: Bambi is most vulnerable when he does not live within himself.

The dangers and hardships of life become occasions for learning how to live. And only those who learn can flourish. When his friend Gobo thinks of winter and the difficulty of finding food, he says: "It must be dreadful." To which Bambi responds: "It isn't dreadful. It's only hard." But Gobo had for a time been cared for by a hunter—pampered like a domestic animal, fed, but made to wear a halter. After Gobo had returned to the forest animals, congratulating himself on his friendship with humans, it had been

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the old stag who had noticed the halter still around his neck and said, "You poor thing." Gobo had not learned to live within himself, to use the hardships of life and the death to which life leads as training in virtue. Lacking such wisdom, he could not possess the inner freedom which can face with tranquillity external hardship and, even, death. This is the wisdom of the old stag: that we must learn to live alone, and that in death "we are all alone."

To live well, one must know how to die well. The old stag is like Seneca's sage: he has such "confidence in himself" (*fiducia sui!*) that he does not retreat from whatever fortune may bring.

> Nor has he any reason to fear her, for he counts not merely his chattels and his possessions and his position, but even his body and his eyes and his hands and all else that makes life very dear to a man, nay, even himself, among the things that are given on sufferance, and he lives as one who had been lent to himself and will return everything without sorrow when it is reclaimed.

The good man cannot be harmed by ill fortune, not even by death, for he has learned to live within himself and to think nothing good except virtue itself. Even death, finally, cannot touch him.

I do not know for certain how we weigh these matters or make these judgments, but, speaking only for myself, I must say that *Bambi* is a more profound book than *Charlotte's Web*, probing more deeply the mystery of mortality. But still better is the third story I take up here: *The Last Battle*, by C. S. Lewis. Last of the seven Chronicles of Narnia, it recounts the end of Narnia and the entry into "Aslan's country" of all loyal Narnians.

From the very outset of the story, readers know what is inevitably to come. Chapter 1 begins: "In the last days of Narnia . . ." The first sentence of chapter 2 introduces Tirian, "last of the Kings of Narnia." And the central characters know what Jewel the Unicorn puts succinctly: "All worlds draw to an end; except Aslan's own country." Hence, there is plenty of room in Narnia for a nobility which the old stag would understand well. When Calormene soldiers infiltrate the land through treachery, Tirian sends Roonwit the Centaur in search of help and reinforcements. But Roonwit finds the other Narnians already killed or captured and himself takes a fatal arrow in the side. Farsight the Eagle brings to Tirian Roonwit's last message: "I was with him in his last hour and he gave me this message to your Majesty: to remember that all worlds draw to an end and that noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy."

That all worlds end is not simply the result of a natural process. It is ultimately the will and work of Aslan. And, more particularly, when "night falls on Narnia," it is because Aslan says: "Now make an end." And against such an ending we are not to protect ourselves. The pain that emotional attachment brings must be risked out of love for the goodness of Narnia. When Narnia is no more, the children who had been sent to help faithful Narnians are called "further in and further up" into Aslan's country.

> "So," said Peter. "Night falls on Narnia. What, Lucy! You're not *crying*? With Aslan ahead, and all of us here?"
>
> "Don't try to stop me, Peter," said Lucy. "I am sure Aslan would not. I am sure it is not wrong to mourn for Narnia. Think of all that lies dead and frozen behind that door." . . .
>
> "Sirs," said Tirian, "The ladies do well to weep. See I do so myself. I have seen my mother's death. What world but Narnia have I ever known? It were no virtue, but great discourtesy if we did not mourn."

Like Charlotte and Wilbur, Narnians have found much to delight in and much to cherish in their world. But knowing that all worlds except Aslan's country come to an end, they cannot find sufficient meaning and purpose simply in the succession of Narnian generations—all of which, after all, lead toward a *finis*. Succession of time and generations, however long extended, does not itself offer a certain kind of present significance. It offers quantity and continuance—more of the same—when what we desire is something qualitatively different. Hence, even if we overcame aging and death, we would not have achieved the heart's desire; for the desire for God is not a longing for more of this life. The old stag, of course, had seen this but was driven to conclude that we dare not therefore attach ourselves to the beauty of this world and the delights of companionship.

What *The Last Battle* offers is a story that legitimizes and invites our attachment to this world, accepts even the pain such attachment may bring, and does not pretend that the death which ends all such attachment is not dreadful. It pictures for us creatures whose hearts are quite rightly tied to particular places and persons, who are finite and who must reckon with the passing of time, but creatures who also are made to desire something more. Not just more of the same, but the qualitatively different country of Aslan. Such creatures—who belong *both* in Narnia *and* in Aslan's country, and who must simply learn to live with such dual membership—are the object of Christian vision. They are dust of the ground and truly belong to this finite world. They are free spirits, made for God and transcending the finite realm. For them death itself must be ambivalent, as ambivalent as the stable door through which the last Narnians are driven by the Calormenes.

"I feel in my bones," said Poggin, "that we

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shall all, one by one, pass through that dark door before morning. I can think of a hundred deaths I would rather have died."

"It is indeed a grim door," said Tirian. "It is more like a mouth."

"Oh, can't we do *anything* to stop it?" said Jill in a shaken voice.

"Nay, fair friend," said Jewel, nosing her gently. "It may be for us the door to Aslan's country and we shall sup at his table tonight."

As the natural end of temporal existence in Narnia, death was always to be anticipated and accepted with as much nobility as one could muster. Like Jewel, Narnians can hope in Aslan, but such hope is not sight, and it would be presumptuous to think of the object of hope as if it were one's present possession. Hence, death remains fearful. And for those who carry dual membership, it becomes doubly dreadful. It threatens the loss of Narnia. And it seems, at least, to bring to an end the quest for Aslan's country, the deepest longing of the heart.

II

Integral to Christian vision is the idea of creatures who have such dual membership—who belong to a world of space, time, and bodies, *and* who are made for the God who creates but transcends this finite world. We can never, therefore, say only one thing about our aging and dying. These events will be as complex as our nature is, and they can always be described from the perspective either of our finitude or our God-directed freedom. The trick is to manage both perspectives simultaneously, distinguishing the two without separating them, holding them together without merging them. Perhaps we can never manage perfectly such a juggling act, but we need to try—to think of human beings both as bodies, for whom the relentless succession of hours and days leads surely to the grave, and as God-aimed spirits, whose every moment is lived in the presence of the Eternal. We are both "out of nature and hopelessly in it." How shall we speak of the aging and dying of such creatures?

We are made for the living God. As the hart longs for cooling streams, so, writes the psalmist, does our soul thirst for God. And, again, if even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for her young, shall we not long for the courts of the Lord? We are made in God's image to respond to him with the God-breathed spirit that gives life to our finite bodies; and we are called by name in the waters of baptism, in which we are incorporated into the life of the One whom the Father calls his beloved Son.

This is the first and most lasting ground of our individuality and our equality. Before God, who calls us by name, we are singled out as individuals. And whatever the number of our days may thus far have been, we are equidistant from that eternal God. From this perspective death must be seen as profoundly *un*natural. However common it is for human beings to age and die, however regular an occurrence in our experience, death remains an affront to our nature. To be sure, since finite bodies grow older and finally die as time passes, we may call such aging natural; certainly it recurs regularly in our experience. But the "natural" may also signify what is appropriate to a particular being, what constitutes that being's fulfillment and flourishing. In this sense, death must be unnatural for those made for fellowship with the One Who Is, those whose full humanity has been revealed in Jesus of Nazareth—who shrank from death and is now the living One.

Death is not fearful only because it means an end to the many experiences we hold dear in this earthly life—though, to be sure, that loss is great. But the God-aimed eternal spirit that is a human being longs for more than a greater quantity of this life. We desire, as Leon Kass has said, something qualitatively different, "some state . . . toward which our earthly activities are directed but which cannot be attained during earthly life."

Because death threatens the loss of that end for which we are created, one of the standard ways of dealing with its terror does not finally persuade. Cicero, for example, in his *De Senectute*, offers this standard argument: If death is the way to a new existence, there is no need to worry. And if, on the other hand, death altogether destroys the soul, there is also no need to worry, since we will no longer exist. But we may want to question at least the second of these claims; for if we no longer exist, our deepest present desire—the longing for God—will have been vain and futile. Desiring such a fulfillment, we will even now be absurd indeed. The threat of death will not give way to such a theory or argument. It gives way, Christians believe, only to an event: the presence of God in the living Jesus.

Hence, it is precisely when we see how much we have to lose in death that we see the fullness of its dread and terror. If we were simply finite beings, interchangeable members of a species that perpetuated itself through our reproduction, death might simply be a component—even a necessary component—of life. But if God has called us by name and called us to himself, if that is our destiny, then in our dying someone unique passes from existence. Thus, Helmut Thielicke writes, "The unnaturalness of death becomes apparent only when we speak of it in connection with God." Simply to describe death as natural, to try to rid it of its ultimate terror by seeing it as part of the rhythm of life, to view it only from the perspective of the finite—this is to risk losing the deepest ground of our individuality and equality.

Having said this, we must not forget, however, that it is also appropriate to think of ourselves as finite beings, limited by biological and historical constraints.

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As such, we do not live forever; at best, we live out what one might term a natural life span. This is not only a matter of years, not only growing old rather than dying while still relatively young. Rather, however difficult it may be to articulate, we tend to think that a "full" life has a certain kind of shape and direction, involves certain stages of development. Nor is this a peculiarly modern insight, for it is common wisdom that Cicero expresses:

> Life's race-course is fixed; Nature has only a single path and that path is run but once, and to each stage of existence has been allotted its own appropriate quality; so that the weakness of childhood, the impetuosity of youth, and the seriousness of middle life, the maturity of old age—each bears some of Nature's fruit, which must be garnered in its own season.

Similarly, Isaiah's vision of the day when the Lord would create new heavens and a new earth, the restoration of life as it should be, makes room for old age as the natural fulfillment of life.

> No more shall there be in [Jerusalem]
> an infant that lives but a few days,
> or an old man who does not fill out his days.

What would it mean to have filled out one's days, to have completed the race course of life? It turns out that a "natural" life span is not an easy thing to specify. Cicero suggests that "satiety" is the key. There comes a time when one is satiated with life, and at that point death is the natural culmination of life. Thus, Cicero says, little children enjoy certain activities; eventually, however, they have their fill of these pursuits and move on to youth. That stage, too, has its characteristic pursuits, and sooner or later we have enough of them and pass on to adulthood. Even there, however, satiety eventually occurs, and we move gradually into old age. It is not simply a time of quiescence; like every other stage of life, it has its characteristic activities and concerns. But eventually we become satiated with them, "and when that happens man has his fill of life and the time is ripe for him to go."

Considering the biblical notion of dying "full of years," Stephen Sapp has made a rather similar suggestion. For a person to be full of years, he writes, is somewhat like a vessel being filled to capacity. "It can hold no more and has fulfilled its purpose by containing all that it was designed to hold." To live beyond such fulfillment, beyond the time when one was "full of years," would be pointless. This is not unlike one of the elements Daniel Callahan includes in the meaning of a "tolerable death": that one's life possibilities have on the whole been accomplished.

These rather similar suggestions are not free of problems. We might, in the first place, worry about the "flavor" of these proposals, their hint that the productive, independent life is the truly worthwhile one. While it is true that our actions over time tend to carve out for us a kind of individuality—an identity which makes us more than just interchangeable members of the species—we can see here the limits to such individuality. It does not reach quite deep enough to capture the individual worth of one who can do little or nothing, but whom God still knows by name.

We might also, in the second place, ponder the implications of the notion of satiety. The idea that life might at some point lose its ability to charm and interest us suggests that the natural world—which, theologically, we must call the creation—might finally fail us. In one sense—but in a sense that applies to every moment of life and not just to old age—this is clearly true. I noted above that for Christian vision this world cannot bear the whole weight of the heart's longing, since in loving God we desire not simply more of this life, but something qualitatively different. Nevertheless, this world through which we make our way to God remains his good gift to us. And part of the meaning of the deadly sin of "sloth" is precisely that we might fail the creation—which is far more likely than that it should fail us. That we might one day fail to discern the beauty of the rising sun or the tranquillity of twilight. That we might lose the capacity to delight in a child's first steps or the passion and power of love. If I tire of reading *Goodnight Moon* to a child—as no child will tire of hearing it read—has something in the creation failed me, or have I failed it? It is true that we may, as we grow older, become satiated with life. But perhaps that can be failure—even moral and spiritual failure—on our part.

There remains still a third difficulty with the notion of satiety as an explanation of a full life. Whatever the precise details, versions of the satiety argument seek some kind of natural limit to life other than simply the wearing down of our finite body, our biological self. We can think of obvious candidates for such a natural limit: Time to see our children grown and our grandchildren born. Time to complete important projects in life, to fulfill the obligations and commitments to others that we have undertaken.

But Leon Kass is correct, I think, to argue that such approaches will not work. They suggest—and, indeed, are precisely intended to suggest—that we might have filled out our days and be ready to die even if we remained in the best of health. Kass notes quite rightly, however, that death might then seem even more objectionable—taking one still vigorous and still quite capable of the very activities that make life full. The concept of a natural life span needs, finally, a grounding in our biological nature, not just in our history. "Withering is nature's preparation for death. . . ." We need withering and senescence lest we deceive ourselves into imagining that everything we desire could be given through more of the same kind of life.

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Otherwise we may seek "an endless present, isolated from anything truly eternal." And, one might add, we need withering if we are to cultivate within ourselves the deepest rhythm of love—the mystery of self-giving and self-sacrifice that is God's love. For in growing old we make place for those who come after us. That is biological fact, but we make of it an act of love when we understand and accept that, in Kass's words, "If they are truly to flower, we must go to seed; we must wither and give ground" in which they can take root.

To discern the necessity of death in our finitude, in the simple biological truth that we wear out, has a great deal of appeal, and it helps us to understand why we react quite differently to the "premature" death of a young boy than to the death of an elderly man "full of years." Cicero's metaphor nicely captures at least something of what we feel.

> Whatever befalls in accordance with Nature would be accounted good; and indeed, what is more consonant with Nature than for the old to die? But the same fate befalls the young, though Nature in their case struggles and rebels. Therefore, when the young die I am reminded of a strong flame extinguished by a torrent; but when old men die it is as if a fire had gone out without the use of force and of its own accord, after the fuel had been consumed. . . .

This image, of fuel having been consumed, is, for me at least, more attractive and less worrisome than the image of a container filled to capacity. In a finely wrought essay, Lewis Thomas has developed a rather similar image. Relying on a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes about a carriage made by a deacon, Thomas tries to distinguish between a life that *breaks down* and (what would be for him a truly natural culmination) a life that *wears out*. The deacon fashioned his carriage with such care that it was the "perfect organism"—each part as good as all the rest, with no weak link. Had there been a weak link, and had that link broken down, the carriage might have halted prematurely, before its time. But instead, since it never breaks down, the whole gradually wears out. As the poem puts it: "A general flavor of mild decay, / But nothing local, as one may say." And finally, one day it simply goes to pieces: "All at once, and nothing first." This is Thomas' picture of a good natural death. When and if we reach the point where disease does not take us prematurely, when there is nothing that causes us to break down, our bodies can simply wear out. In Kass's word, we "wither."

How does Thomas respond to the thought of such a death? "No tears, no complaints, no listening closely for last words. No grief. Just, in the way of the world, total fulfillment." Perhaps. But perhaps we ought to wonder just a bit. *Total* fulfillment? Thomas does add the qualifier, "in the way of the world." Still, the way of our world, of creatures marked by the duality that marks us, cannot be captured solely in terms of our finitude. Such a death, and such an evaluation of it, suggests a vision that asks too little, that chokes off the heart's longing for God. Much in it is appealing, but it cannot comprehend everything we need to say.

We are bodies, aging in time. We are spirits made for One who exists beyond time. And in thinking about our living and our dying, we must somehow see and think both truths about ourselves, we must distinguish but not separate these two perspectives on human nature. One way to avoid such separation is to note that each angle of vision may shed light upon the other. We may appreciate our world for what it is only when we also see—from the perspective of the Eternal—what it is not and cannot naturally become. And we may see better how to live before and toward God only as we remember that the way to God must be traversed, lived out in this world where, amidst much sorrow and suffering, there is also much in which to take joy.

Below I offer three brief illustrations of ways in which the two angles of vision can interact, enriching and qualifying one another in our thinking. The first is an example from the realm of medical care, an inquiry into the meaning of proper care for the dying. The second also deals with medical treatment, but takes up what is best described as a question of public policy, the issue of rationing care for the elderly. And the third turns away from larger questions about our obligations to others in order to think about how we ought to live toward death.

III

The task of caring for the dying has been greatly complicated by medical advances of recent decades; yet its deepest difficulties are more fundamental still. Chapter 3 of Paul Ramsey's *The Patient as Person*—a chapter titled "On Only Caring for the Dying"—remains a classic Christian treatment of the meaning of care. Ramsey argues that we care properly for the dying when we acknowledge that at some point their death is irretrievably upon them and should no longer be resisted, but he also argues that "care" can never include actions intended to cause death. Put very simply: although we should never aim to kill, we can and should sometimes allow to die. We should "never abandon care"—and such abandonment can come either through hastening death, or through struggling daily against death when its time has come, a struggle that will deflect us from giving the care really needed at that point.

Ramsey recognizes, however, that from two different viewpoints—diametrically opposed, yet strangely similar—one might object to this distinction between killing and allowing to die. Some might claim that whether we kill or allow to die the result is the same: death. Hence, these opponents conclude, we should

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never give up the struggle against death. We should not intend to kill; neither should we allow to die. We should simply fight death until the matter is taken out of our hands. Other opponents begin from the same premise: that whether we aim to kill or allow to die, what counts morally is that the same result—death—follows. Hence, *they* conclude, we should not only allow to die but also, on some occasions, deliberately kill (in order, for example, to relieve suffering). The first of these opposing views sees human beings as all finitude, needing simply more days and hours, never free to determine that a greater length of days is not the fulfillment for which we are made. The second sees human beings as all freedom—creatures who may seek to master even death, since it does not confront us with the limit that is God.

Ramsey's approach, by contrast, grounded in the paradoxical duality of our nature as finite *and* free, must seek to balance the intricate simultaneities to which this duality gives rise. Hence, a policy of always caring, but only caring, for the dying. Grounded in an understanding of human beings in relation to God, this policy may turn out to contain a good bit of humane wisdom. Faith seeks understanding—and sometimes finds it. The true meaning of death appears when we see it as unnatural—not only the loss of all that we love in this earthly life, but also the apparent loss of the One for whom we are created and toward whom we live. Hence, death is an evil, not to be sought. And yet, more days and years, more of the same, is also not the good our hearts desire—and, hence, we need not cling to this life as if it were our god. Faith makes a double movement—treasuring life as good, but not the highest good; resisting death as evil, even though not the greatest evil. And still more, faith—looking at death through the prism of the crucified and risen Jesus—trusts that this evil can be used for good, that the boundary of death will prove to be not the negation but the fulfillment of our pilgrimage.

Hence, death should always be mourned; sorrow is always fitting even when death is acknowledged, even when faith describes it in the language of fulfillment. Whether death comes upon us in youth or old age, suddenly or after prolonged illness or decline, one whom God called by name is gone. From the vantage point of that relation to God, our true individuality appears and we see the loss death brings. Indeed, we may not cherish each other's body and life as we ought unless we discern in one another the image of the God who calls us to himself. If I too readily accept your dying, if I think of it simply as part of the natural rhythm of life, I may value your person too little.

Not only our individuality but also our equality is most firmly grounded in the God-relation. We can see this if we turn from thinking about care for a particular person to a problem for public policy. Consider, for example, a choice between two kinds of rationing schemes described by Norman Daniels. Faced with limited medical resources, we might use an age criterion to distribute those resources. That is, we could say that those who had lived beyond a "normal life span" (perhaps age seventy-five) would not be eligible to receive a variety of life-extending but very costly medical treatments (for example, transplant surgery). These treatments could be developed and used, but their use would be restricted to those who had not yet lived out that normal span of life. An alternative scheme might be a kind of lottery—in which sophisticated and expensive technologies that could not be available for all were allocated by random. In this case, of course, a very old woman might receive the treatment—say, kidney dialysis—that could otherwise have saved a young child.

Daniels, whose aim is to develop a "prudential life span" theory of distributing medical resources, believes that the first approach—the age criterion—is preferable. Since all of us are first young and then older, he suggests that such an approach would treat no one unfairly. Therapies available to all of us when we were young would be available to none of us once we grew sufficiently old. This is a policy, we might say, that tries to take seriously the shape of our finite life. It reckons with the fact that there is a measure to our days and a patterned form to human life. And it seeks to treat us equally over the course of a whole life, even if not at every moment of that life.

Still, such an approach to distributive justice may trouble us. It does so in part because it grounds purpose and meaning—as well as fairness—in the shape of a whole life and not also in every moment of it. If this policy tries to treat us equally by remembering that we each live out the life span, it still invites us to treat some of our days and years as if they counted for less than others, as if each moment were not lived before God. And a society in which each of us is invited to treat our years of decline as less valuable than our more vigorous, productive years may find it difficult to get away from the comparative judgments *between* human beings that Daniels himself is eager to avoid. It may prove to be a society inhospitable to the nonproductive and the dependent. I do not argue that this must happen—only that we are not foolish to wonder if it might. A vision which sees every moment of life as equidistant from the Eternal may better preserve our equal worth.

Indeed, I am inclined to think that Daniels' proposal would be safe only in a society that thought of human life not simply in terms of a normal life span but also as directed toward God. We can see how this might be true if we consider an argument about capital punishment made by Camus. He suggested that the justice or injustice of the death penalty depended on the ultimate frame of reference within which it was used and understood. And he argued that capital punishment could be justified only where there was a socially shared religious belief that the final verdict

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on any person's life was not given in this world. In such a religious society, to condemn a fellow human being to death would not involve divine pretension. Those who issued and executed the verdict would know that, however necessary it seemed to be, it could still be overturned by the only perfectly competent judge, God himself. But what of a society that lacked such beliefs? In it, Camus thought, execution would mean elimination from the only human community that indisputably existed; and, hence, execution would be a godlike activity. Only in a society that believed in the Eternal could it be right to act as if this finite life were not everything.

Similarly, one might decide that an account of justice grounded in a notion of a normal life span—grounded, that is, in the developed form of a life that includes infancy, youth, adulthood, and old age—might be safest in a society of people who did not believe that this was the only truth about our nature. It is one thing to put forward a vision of the limits of this finite life if we believe that our lives are also touched by and directed toward the infinite God. It is quite another to claim a comprehensive vision and mastery of this life—our own and that of others—when we acknowledge nothing more. We know best how to oppose and how to acknowledge death when we do not think of it simply as natural.

Finally, it may be useful to ponder whether thinking about death from the perspective of our nature as finite and free can give us guidance about how we ought to live as we grow older. Suppose we envision two retirement dinners, honoring two men who have been productive and successful in their work, whose careers have been marked by considerable achievement.

At the dinner in honor of the first, the retiree is asked to say a few words near the end of the festivities. He does so with the grace one might have expected and speaks of his hopes and plans for the coming years. He hopes, he says, to keep his hand in with the company, doing some consulting on a limited basis. But he intends also to attempt a little independent entrepreneurial activity, since he has always wanted to publish a newsletter aimed at those who can profit from his experience. He plans some traveling but has in mind also new activities. For example, he has always wanted to learn scuba diving, and now he will have time for it. Finally, he never felt he had sufficient time for community affairs; now, though, he hopes to become active in local politics, perhaps even to run for office.

At the dinner honoring the second retiree, he too is invited to say a few words to those present. He does so, telling his friends and acquaintances how he plans to alter abruptly his life's course. He has one simple plan for the coming years: he wants to learn how to die. To that end, he wants fewer possessions; for, as Cicero put it, "can anything be more absurd in the traveler than to increase his luggage as he nears his journey's end?" He has, he says, much reading that he needs to do. He hopes to write some reminiscences for his children. And he wants to learn the art of contemplative and intercessory prayer. He intends to begin every day with these words from a prayer by John Baillie:

> Forbid, O Lord God, that my thoughts today should be wholly occupied with the world's passing show. Seeing that in Thy lovingkindness Thou hast given me the power to lift my mind to the contemplation of things unseen and eternal, forbid that I should remain content with the things of sense and time. Grant rather that each day may do something so to strengthen my hold upon the unseen world, so to increase my sense of its reality, and so to attach my heart to its holy interests that, as the end of my earthly life draws ever nearer, I may not grow to be a part of these fleeting earthly surroundings, but rather grow more and more conformed to the life of the world to come.

If we were present at these dinners, how would we react? Probably the second talk would be more likely to disconcert the crowd; certainly many would be baffled by it. I confess, however, to finding it more satisfying. Were I in need of important advice, I would sooner approach the second man than the first. Yet, perhaps neither plan for retirement is completely adequate. A kind of fear is concealed in the first man's planned frenzy of activity—fear that he might die with some desire unsatisfied. And so he grabs for as much finitude as he can get. That rush of activity chokes off—or perhaps conceals and pacifies—the restless heart that wants something quite different from "more of the same."

But even though I have confessed my admiration for the second man, perhaps he too has not managed perfectly the simultaneities required by the duality of our nature. His plans may call to mind the "satiety" image of a full life; for we are not certain how best to describe his intentions. Is he turning from a life of which he has had his fill and is now tired? Or is he, noting that he is wearing out, simply gazing more steadfastly at the One from whom the delights of this life come? Is he tired of drinking from the waters that have sustained his life? Or is he seeking the underground source of those refreshing waters?

Whatever we say in answer to such questions, this man's fundamental task in life has not really abruptly changed: he must still live *within* the finite world *before* the eternal God. And he takes the measure of his days best when he uses a significant turning point simply as an occasion to rethink now in the present the significance of what has always been true: That we live every moment of life equidistant from eternity. That, nonetheless, we must walk—moment by moment—the pilgrim's way toward God. And that, always, we must struggle to find a way to do both. FT

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Judaism, Zionism, Messianism: Telling Them Apart

David Novak

The relation between Judaism, Zionism, and Messianism is one that is often hard for Jews to get straight. Needless to say, it is even harder for non-Jews. Nevertheless, current events in Israel urgently require clarification of this relation for both Jews and non-Jews, since it is the subject of endless confusion. If left unclarified, this confusion will continue to have very dangerous consequences—politically, morally, and spiritually—both for the State of Israel and for world Jewry.

I

Until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, anti-Zionism among Jews was at least as strong as Zionism. This anti-Zionism took three main forms. First, there was the anti-Zionism of certain extremely Orthodox Jews (mostly Hasidim), who regarded the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel—even if religiously constituted—to be a presumptuous act of premature pseudo-messianism. Second, there was the anti-Zionism of the "classical" Reform Jews (who organized themselves as the American Council for Judaism in 1942), who regarded Judaism to be a "religion" in the Western sense, that is, a faith community having no necessary national component. Third, there was the anti-Zionism of more doctrinaire Jewish Marxists (both Communists and anti-Communist socialists), who regarded the solution to "the Jewish problem" to be world revolution rather than continued Jewish particularism, whether religious or national. After 1948, however, the overwhelming number of Jews became Zionists, either by conviction or by default. History, at least for the moment, seemed to vindicate Zionism and to show anti-Zionism to be a dangerous illusion.

But there are better, more Judaic, reasons for Jews to reject anti-Zionism, reasons based on the Torah and Jewish tradition. Although for traditional Jews the Torah and Jewish tradition are to be found *in* history, they are certainly not *of* history.

Even though the Orthodox anti-Zionists have some important traditional Jewish texts on their side, those texts are homiletical rather than strictly halakhic (that is, legally normative). Clearly, Jewish law considers Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel (*yishuv eretz yisrael*) to be required whenever possible. In the modern world, such a possibility entails maintenance of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Furthermore, the protection of vulnerable Jewish lives is even more strongly mandated by Jewish law than is the quietism the religious anti-Zionists seem to advocate. Recent Jewish experience, epitomized by the Holocaust, has convinced most Jews that their security is far better enhanced by the presence of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel than by its absence.

As for the few Reform anti-Zionists who still remain, all of the above arguments apply to them as well. Moreover, their position is at variance with the overwhelming thrust of the Torah and Jewish tradition. Judaism is not a "religion," if that term is meant in the Western sense of distinguishing between "religion" and "nationality." The religious doctrine of traditional Judaism entails the acceptance of the nationhood of the Jewish people and the everlasting sanctity of the Land of Israel for them.

Finally, the dwindling band of Jewish "internation-

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alists" need to face up not only to the persistence of anti-Semitism in all forms of Marxism but also to the fact that there is absolutely nothing in Jewish tradition that approves, let alone mandates, their form of religious suicide and national assimilation.

II

The demise of anti-Zionism has, however, led too many Jews to assume that Judaism *is* Zionism, that everything in the Torah and Jewish tradition is either Zionism *per se* or for the sake of Zionism. That equation is as false as the various forms of anti-Zionism we have just outlined. Thoughtful Jews must discover the exact locus of this error and refute its basic fallacy.

Until very recently, this simplistic equation of Judaism and Zionism was almost always found among secularist Jews. Having rejected the traditional view that Jewish identity is constituted by God's election of the Jewish people and God's revelation of the Torah to them, these secularists saw the essence of Jewish identity and continuity to be Jewish nationhood. Jews, for them, are to be considered as any other nation: a single ethnic community in its own land, speaking its own language, developing its own culture.

Correlative with this nationalistic self-constitution is the notion of the "negation of the diaspora" (*shelilat ha-golah*). Obviously (in this view), once the Jewish state has been established in the Land of Israel, Jewish communities and Jewish individuals outside the Land no longer have any *raison d'être* and ought to wither away. However, just as the three forms of anti-Zionism proved to be counterhistorical, so has this simplistic secularist Zionism. The fact is that the majority of world Jewry, for whatever reasons, chooses to live elsewhere than in the State of Israel; and the fact is that Jewish life outside of Israel has not withered away. Quite the contrary, in many places it is experiencing tremendous renewal.

In terms of the Torah and Jewish tradition, the importance of the Land of Israel and Jewish settlement in it do not negate the historical possibility of vital Jewish existence outside the Land and the religious obligation to maintain and enhance it. Even the most radically Zionistic statement in the Talmud—"one who lives outside the Land of Israel is like one who has no God" (*Ketubot* 110b)—is interpreted by most traditional commentators to mean that God is the Lord of the entire world and Jews are to obey God's commandments wherever they happen to live. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of a deeper and more comprehensive relationship with God in the Promised Land than anywhere else on earth. This is attested by the fact that all commandments Jews are to observe outside the Land of Israel are also to be observed in the Land of Israel, in addition to some additional commandments that can only be observed there. In other words, Zionism enhances Judaism; it does not, however, replace it. Zionism is the branch, not the root. Roots can live without branches, although truncated; branches cannot live without roots.

This traditional relation between Judaism and Zionism has, tragically, been lost on too many American Jews (and their leaders), among whom Zionism has become a substitute for Judaism rather than a consequence of it. They believe, or have been led to believe, that their Jewish identity stands or falls on their unqualified support of the State of Israel, even their unqualified support of whatever government happens to be currently in power there. (Americans, unlike Europeans, have a hard time distinguishing between a government and a state.) Thus they seem to have worked out for themselves the best of all possible Zionist worlds: supporting Israel but not living there.

This attitude winds up in massive incoherence. It draws upon almost none of the roots of authentic Zionism in classical Judaism. If support for the State of Israel is the essence of Judaism, and if that support takes a basically political form, then what distinguishes a Jewish supporter of the State of Israel from a non-Jewish supporter? Clearly, current history has shown that one does not have to be a Jew to be a Zionist. Furthermore, would anyone want to argue, following the logic of this line, that anti-Zionist or non-Zionist Jews who lead identifiably religious Jewish lives are not actually Jews? This secularist equation of Judaism and Zionism, a glib ideology without solid theological or philosophical support, quickly reduces to a *reductio ad absurdam*.

III

Since 1967, with the reunification of Jerusalem and the control of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall by Jews, a new, more subtle identification of Judaism and Zionism has emerged, one more strident and (to my mind) more dangerous, both for Jews and for Judaism. In order to be clearly understood, it must be contrasted with secularist Zionism.

Among the many Judaic omissions made by secularist Zionism has been the omission of traditional Jewish messianism. Although that messianism entails the reestablishment of the Jewish state in the Land of Israel, there is much more to it than that. For traditional Jewish messianism, there is also the constitution of the state according to the full body of Jewish law (*Halakhah*), plus the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of the system of sacrificial worship.

Liberal Jews, whether Zionist or not, have always been embarrassed by this aspect of traditional Jewish messianism. So in their reformed liturgies the traditional petitionary prayer that "we be replanted within the boundaries of our land where we shall again offer the commanded sacrifices" has either been eliminated altogether or rephrased to become a remembrance of things past rather than a hope for things to come.

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Is this not simply another example of the general surrender to modern thought (or even modern taste) by liberal Jews? Thus, when liberal religious Jews are also Zionists, as most of them now are, their Zionism is often hard to distinguish from the nonreligious or even antireligious Zionism of the secularists.

Religious Zionism, almost always advocated by Orthodox Jews, has attempted to be as traditionally justified as anti-Zionist Orthodoxy—minus its political quietism—and as strongly pro-Israel as secularist Zionism—minus its non-Judaic rationale. Religious Zionism, however, takes two divergent forms. One I regard as dangerous, the other as hopeful. The two diverge on the issue of messianism.

For one form of religious Zionism, epitomized by the group know as *Gush Emunim* ("the block of the faithful"), the reestablishment of the State of Israel is the literal beginning of the messianic redemption of the Jewish people. They often refer to the State of Israel as "the beginning of redemption" (*atehalta de-ge'ulah*). The most extreme branch of this group, known as *Ateret Kohanim* ("the crown of the priests"), actually advocates the immediate construction of the Third Temple on the present Temple Mount—even if that requires the destruction of the mosque that presently stands there. For this movement, redemption is something humanly achievable, with the certain hope of miraculous divine aid. Indeed, they see the incredible Jewish recapture of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967 as adequate proof of the availability of such aid.

Nonreligious arguments, either moral ones about the rights of Arabs or political ones about how this would be disastrous for Israel's international image as a democratic state, are dismissed out of hand as evidence of absence of faith. Furthermore, these religious Zionists go as far as they can to justify Judaism in terms of the full Messianic-Zionist agenda they see as its goal. Finally, although highly intolerant of nonreligious Jews (and even religious Jews) who disagree with them and their agenda, they seem to have no trouble at all making common cause with such nonbelievers and nonpractitioners of traditional Judaism as Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon, who, for their own political reasons, actively encourage them.

IV

Unfortunately, the fact that a considerable segment of the traditional Jewish community does not share this eschatology is a secret for many Jews and, certainly, for many more non-Jews.

There are many sources in Jewish tradition which clearly teach that while Jews may settle the Land of Israel and govern it by their own immediate initiative (though whether this is a specific Torah commandment is debated), they may not rebuild the Temple until the Messiah has already come. These sources were quite effectively presented in the late 1960s by Justice Moshe Silberg, writing on behalf of the Israel Supreme Court, who forbade *Gush Emunim*-type pietists from establishing any place of worship at all on the Temple Mount. Indeed, it was this decision that prevented the rumored ascent by Jews onto the Temple Mount last October during the festival of Sukkot, a rumored action that supposedly touched off the Arab stoning of Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall and the widely criticized reaction of the Israeli police (even by some Israelis) that resulted in the death of at least seventeen Arabs. Although Justice Silberg was writing in a secular capacity for a secular court, his arguments were mostly drawn from the Jewish religious tradition. In this view, the process of redemption is God's work, not man's. The work of man is to respond to the Covenant by obeying the commandments of the Torah, those commandments that can be obeyed here and now.

It is essential for Jews and non-Jews alike to realize that such a transcendent eschatology entails a more realistic and morally structured political program than does an imminent messianism. It enables Jews to deal with this world in its own terms with the full sobriety of the Jewish legal system precisely by recognizing the essential distinction between any human state—even a Jewish human state—and the Kingdom of God. The prophets of ancient Israel made this distinction abundantly clear.

The acknowledged leader of the rabbinical academies (*yeshivot*) in Israel, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, has repeatedly warned the traditional Jewish community about the religious dangers in the pseudo-messianism of too many religious Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora. In fact, he has gone so far as to compare an American Hasidic leader, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of Lubavitch—apparently regarded as the Messiah by some of his most zealous followers—to Shabbetai Zevi, the famous false Messiah of the seventeenth century. His arguments have not been based on secular morality (for which he has contempt) or on anti-Zionism (which he has avoided). Rather, they have been based on his mastery of the traditional Jewish sources and his realistic awareness of the danger for Jews of engaging in utopian militancy.

Also, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the immediate past Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, and a scholar with a phenomenal command of the Jewish legal sources, has been warning more and more of late that the Law itself requires Jews to live within very definite moral and political bounds in a clearly unredeemed world. Similarly, along more philosophical lines, the Orthodox Israeli thinker Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz has not hesitated to brand the religious justification of raw nationalism by *Gush Emunim* and its various supporters as a form of idolatry, substituting as it does the supremacy of a human state (however beloved and needed by Jews) for the restraints of God's Torah. Many religious Jews basically sympathetic to Leibowitz's point of view have organized themselves into a

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religious peace movement called *Oz Ve-Shalom* ("strength and peace"), a group with a very different *raison d'être* than that of the secularist Peace Now movement. None of these men or the members of *Oz Ve-Shalom* (of which I am a member) could be called anti-Zionist. All of them live in Israel and are its loyal citizens.

Unfortunately, the present Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon seems to regard it as advantageous to its own interests to present *Gush Emunim* to the world as the full voice of traditional Jewry and to ignore the voices of Shach, Yosef, Leibowitz, *Oz Ve-Shalom*, and others. It is for this reason that I as a traditional Jew and a Zionist feel obligated to inform the widest audience possible of the Jewish authenticity of this position, on both legal and theological grounds. The commandment to sanctify God's name in the world (*kiddush Ha-Shem*) requires Jews to present the Torah and Jewish tradition to the world in the most morally attractive light possible.

V

The error of the militant wing of religious Zionism is to confuse Judaism, Zionism, and Messianism, seeing all three as one essential entity. As I have tried to show here, these are three distinct entities, albeit closely interrelated. Judaism is the Covenant between God and the people of Israel which the Torah substantiates. Zionism is the movement for Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. It is Judaically justifiable when it roots itself in God's promise of the Land of Israel to the elect people of Israel, and when it enhances the unique opportunity Jews have to serve God most fully in the Land of Israel. Messianism is the hope for God's final redemption of the people of Israel—and along with them all of humankind. And it is Judaically justifiable when it roots itself in God's ultimate, eschatological promise, and when it does not see itself as Zionism's inevitable outcome. Thus both Zionism and Messianism are rooted in Judaism, but they are rooted in it quite differently.

Zionism is the finite task of the Jewish people here and now for the sake of its life in this world. Messianism is the infinite task of God for the sake of the world-yet-beyond. Jewish pseudo-messianism blurs these essential distinctions. Hence it tragically forgets that "the hidden things belong to the Lord our God; it is the revealed things, all the words of this Torah, that are for us and our children to do" (Deuteronomy 29:28). FT

Mueca a la Muerte: Defiance in a Grimace

That the world should end in an orgy of pain
was inconceivable at my conception in the Panama Canal Zone
where the hydraulic locks were emblems of the unity of oceans.

But the hydraulic harmony was striated with tropical
diseases and now cancer where was torrid procreation;
day and night a St. Vitus dance of pain's mummers.

Nothing will do but to battle brainless hurt,
stand up in the field of forked lightning striking blindly,
outfacing the outrage of inexorable vulgarity.

There must be no victory for the base and common in the inevitable
but an enraged wild beast's growl of contempt
for the enemy of what is eternal in one's dreaming.

Anthony Kerrigan

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Honor in the University

Stanley Hauerwas

We live in a time when ethics has become big business: medical schools hire medical ethicists, business schools hire business ethicists, Congress has an ethics committee, and schools and universities are supposed to teach values. As a theologian trained in ethics, I suppose I should be happy about this development. Suddenly, people think that there are experts in ethics who can make right all that has gone wrong in our public life. As far as I am concerned, however, the hiring of ethicists in medical schools and business schools to lecture to students about what it means to be ethical or to teach values is to try to cure the illness with but another form of the disease.

Let me elaborate. I object to the term "value." In our culture, values denote personal preferences in contrast to "objective" facts. But as Alasdair MacIntyre has reminded us in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, facts, like telescopes and wigs for gentlemen, are seventeenth-century inventions, and I think it is time to leave these inventions behind. As I do not believe in facts, so I do not believe in their contrast, values. Nor should universities be concerned about either.

This leaves me in a bit of a quandary, since the subject I want to address is what it might mean for a university to be Christian. If I engaged in a jeremiad about the sad condition of the modern university, that jeremiad would include most Christian universities. I have elsewhere attacked the current notion that colleges and universities should be about the Socratic function of allowing students to make up their own minds. This assumption is celebrated in the movie *The Dead Poets Society*, whose protagonist is a teacher who intends above all to help students make up their own minds. My own view, however, is that the concept of education he represents is completely corrupt, because most students do not have minds worth making up.

I realize that I have just insulted students everywhere, but it is important that I confront your self-perceptions. I cannot think of anything that invites you to be more in the conformist mode of the American proposition than for you to believe that you should make up your own minds. That attitude defeats rather than sustains education. It undercuts the formation of people of virtue capable of withstanding the confrontation with truth. Making up one's mind has nothing to do with being educated.

Most colleges today approach their curriculum as though it were a market for an elite group of consumers—their students. Students come to the university to consume ideas, and the teachers present various alternatives in class. If asked, "Which one do you think is true?" the teachers say, "That is not my task. I'm just trying to help you understand what the options are so that you can make up your own mind." If the assumption that students are fundamentally consumers who can make up their own minds is not challenged, students so educated will never be able to stand up against capitalist manipulation. Capitalist interests are served when students believe that they are free consumers who get to choose between a Sony or a Panasonic radio. It never occurs to them that this choice is imposed. They are taught to call such choices "freedom."

The assumption that we should train students to make up their own minds is deeply rooted in modernity's understanding of morality—that is, that ethics has to do with decisions. Therefore, most ethics courses today are shaped around such questions as, "What would you do in these circumstances?" These decisions are supposed to be made by that most fictitious entity of modernity, the individual. Such a view of morality is fundamentally at odds with those (like me) who believe that *moral life is about the*

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formation of virtuous people by tradition-formed communities. Perhaps this is what a Christian university is or could be about.

To elicit this sense of morality that might make a Christian university different from its secular counterparts, I want to address one of the essential practices that makes a university morally coherent: I want to discuss honor and honor codes and why honor is intrinsic to the university. I am going to make six contentious claims that I believe to be true. I also believe that insofar as a university embodies these truths in its life, we can hope that moral discourse is possible there—even if it is a university that teaches students to make up their own minds.

My six contentions are these:

1. Cheating is a more serious crime than murder for those engaged in the activities of learning and teaching.
2. There is honor among thieves, but that does not mean that honor is a bad idea.
3. The fact that we have an honor code or the fact that we should have an honor code does not mean that we have a corrupt community or institution.
4. If you do not cheat, that is, if you do not use someone else's work on a test and do not use material in a paper without due acknowledgment, that does not mean you are a person of honor—but it is not a bad place to start.
5. The most compassionate thing that you can do as a Christian is to turn someone in for cheating.
6. If you think that you can cheat while you are in school because this is just preparation for the real world, you will never be prepared for the real world because it doesn't get any more real than this.

Those are my six contentions. Now I want to explain each one.

1. Cheating is a more serious crime than murder for those engaged in the activities of learning and teaching.

Note that I did not say "for colleges, universities, or schools," all of which may or may not have to do with learning and teaching. Learning and teaching certainly require institutional support, but they are activities that may be more or less supported or corrupted by their institutional embodiments. Learning and teaching are activities that any good community requires, and while they often take place in schools and universities, they also occur in construction trades and farms. Alasdair MacIntyre has defined such practices as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence in human conception of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended." Though this account may not provide for the appropriate sense of purpose as part of a practice, it nonetheless nicely suggests how we became more than we are by being part of such practices.

Teaching is a practice and learning is a practice because we believe that we have something worth passing on from one generation to another. Such passing on may be something as basic as one bricklayer teaching another bricklayer how to hold a trowel in order to spread mortar, or one person taking another through Plato's *Meno* to understand whether virtue can be taught. Inherent in these practices is learning how to pass on shared judgments, how to give back what we have learned and so indicate that we have got it. Therefore, initiation into the knowledge of the past presumes willingness to be exposed to judgment in order to know whether one has it right or wrong.

To be initiated into a craft, an apprentice must learn from the teacher, and then from continuing self-education, how to identify mistakes in applying the standards recognized to be the best available in the practice of that craft. Learning a craft is tricky; apprentices must learn to distinguish what in particular situations is really good to do from what only seems good to do. I am thinking of things like learning to pot. It may well be that some of the most important courses one can teach at a university are pottery and auto mechanics.

You could correctly surmise that I am not an advocate of liberal arts education as something intrinsic to Christian universities. Indeed, I do not like the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. All knowledge that is interesting is practical and draws upon a deep community interest. So the craft analogy is meant in a straightforward manner. By thinking of education as a form of craft, moreover, we can better appreciate the role of the teacher.

As Professor MacIntyre has suggested in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, to learn how to pot an apprentice must learn to distinguish between two kinds of excellence: that which the apprentice and others can expect of himself or herself here and now, and that which furnishes both apprentice and master craftsman with the final end of the craft itself. Clearly, then, the only way one learns a craft is through apprenticeship to a master. This claim is crucial. You cannot learn to lay brick; you can be taught how to hold a trowel, how to spread mortar, or how to hold a brick. But the only way you ever learn to lay brick is by working with a master bricklayer, day in and day out, learning all the nuances of the craft.

If the bricklaying analogy is unfamiliar to you, think

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about craft in terms of learning to play a musical instrument. To learn how to play a musical instrument, you must be initiated into the art by a master. Part of being initiated is learning to trust the master's judgments, and you find out that judgments are not things that can be learned by rote.

To achieve the purpose of the craft, then, apprentices learn that they must be transformed. They do not try to transform their interest; they just learn day in and day out that, for example, to form a pot it is important to use this clay rather than that clay. Distinguishing between clays is extremely important. For me, a nonpotter, clay is clay; but master potters learn to distinguish between clays with the kind of discriminating judgment they have earned through initiation into the craft. They have been changed by being taught how to appreciate different kinds of clays.

Notice that genuine education understood as becoming a skilled practitioner requires recognition of an authority who has earned our trust. Yet one of the most important developments in universities today has been the devaluation of what it means to sit under a master teacher. Instead, students sit under technocrats who have been given licenses through the Ph.D., and the question about what constitutes a master teacher has on the whole been ignored. Yet though ignored, the master-apprentice relationship may still be hanging on. We still give apprentices, whom we call students, a way to discover their appropriation of the craft by inviting them to demonstrate that they understand what has been taught. Some of the ways we ask you to discover for yourselves what you are engaged in are tests and assigned papers.

Universities, then, are institutions set aside for the passing on of the knowledge we call wisdom—about matters that matter. Because judgments must be learned through apprenticeship to masters—some dead, some living—we cannot and do not use others' work without due acknowledgment, because to do so would betray our learning activity. We would not be acknowledging the masters who are necessary for us to do our work well if we failed to so acknowledge them. We are required to footnote, not because the others' work is theirs, as if there were a capitalist relationship between oneself and one's work. I know that if I have a "creative idea," it just means I have forgotten where I read it. A creative idea is not property. Due acknowledgment of others' work is a way of indicating who are the necessary members of the conversation I am participating in to acquire the same kinds of nuanced judgments that I find exhibited in their lives. It is not as if I think of my work as a property that I own; but it is crucial that I show from whom I have learned and in what ways I may disagree with them.

Cheating, then, is any form of life that makes the activity of learning and teaching impossible. For institutions set aside for teaching and learning, therefore, cheating is worse than murder because cheating strikes at the heart of the reason we are there. Although murder is a terrible crime, cheating is worse than murder at these institutions. I do not mean that it is alright to kill somebody at a university, but cheating is worse because murder does not challenge the very nature of the institution. Those of us in universities must remember that we are called to be there. It is a privilege to be at a university, to be a student engaged in the kind of activity I have suggested. It is a privilege to be set aside to do nothing but to read books, to become articulate, to learn to speak eloquently, to learn to appreciate a great painting. If you are so called and so set aside that means that you are seen as people gifted to face the rigors of living with the constant judgment that is part and parcel of being initiated into such activities.

In a world where people are starving, in a world where people are being killed every minute by the deepest injustice, how can you possibly justify taking time out in your life to do nothing but learn to read books well? I contend that this privilege comes from a community that believes that nothing is more important than to have a people who bear the rigors of seeing more truthfully the way the world is by exposing themselves to the otherness of the other which they meet through the ongoing business of learning a craft well. It takes a substantive community to believe that we can so set people aside.

People say to me, "Oh, you're a teacher," and I say "yes" and they say, "Well, how much do you teach?" and I say "six hours" and they say, "Wow, that's quite a lot for a day," and I say, "No, no, a week," and they say, "You work six hours a week?" and I say, "Yes, I teach six hours a week, that's how often I am in class," and they say, "Man, I can't believe that." I have been set aside to do nothing with my life but try to understand the significance of the Trinity and its implications for the nature of the moral life. Can you imagine a community setting anyone aside to do that? Why would they set aside people who do nothing but try to understand that there is something crucial about understanding that God is three and that as a matter of fact this claim has tremendous significance for the way we live? People who have been so set aside to engage in that kind of activity would need virtues of humor, humility, and courage to engage in that process. In short, they need to be honorable. So concludes the defense of my first contentious proposition.

2. There is honor among thieves, but that does not mean that honor is a bad idea.

It is certainly true that to be honorable is not sufficient in itself. After all, the Nazi SS was constituted by honor. These extraordinary people would unquestioningly sacrifice their lives for what they thought was worthy. They could be trusted, moreover, to be

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exactly what they were: SS. What you saw was what you got. That is important since one of the essential characteristics of people of honor is that they are not different from what they say they are. Moreover, honor requires a correlation with institutions that give us patterns of life that are worthy. Universities, we believe, are such institutions insofar as they have been set aside to sustain the wisdom of a people.

Even as I say this, I want to be clear that I am not at all sure that the contemporary university is morally intelligible. It is by no means clear what moral community the university is serving or what its task should be. Christian universities ought to be challenging assumptions that to my mind are undermining education today, assumptions, for example, that people have rights and/or that life is about happiness. Both of these assumptions seem to me to be cultural sentimentalities that are destroying the kind of reflection that is required in the university. Students need to be told that it is not always good to like your life. If you are miserable, that is not a bad way to be. It is tough being young; it is an awful time of life as far as I am concerned now that I am out of it. I think that if you are unhappy you may have a lot of good reasons to be unhappy. Besides, who told you that you were supposed to be about happiness? It's never easy to be happy, and most of the time you should not be.

Aristotle said that *eudaemonia* (happiness) is a complete virtue in a complete life. He taught that, if you felt happy when you were young, you were in a deep delusion. I think that is probably correct, because any happiness worth having is derived from being engaged in worthwhile activities (like the study of theology) that are so engaging that you forget to ask if you are happy. Education is not about supplying wants, but teaching new wants. Providing this kind of education requires the university to be supported by institutions that stand against our culture's sentimentalities about happiness.

There is a peculiar notion today that what makes a university Christian is what goes on in the classroom. You require a few theology courses and, if you are a Catholic school, maybe a few philosophy courses. Or maybe you think that what makes a university Christian today is real concern about a student's life outside of the classroom. Then what makes a Christian university Christian is its Student Life division. I contend that if you let that happen, you live in a corrupt university. If you think that Christianity is primarily about regulating student life and taking care of troubled students in a way that has nothing to do with the activity characteristic of the classroom, then, as a matter of fact, you have lost the day and you have no rationale for a Student Life office to begin with.

On the contrary, what makes a Christian university Christian are personnel decisions about the kind of people who teach there. When someone is being considered for employment, deans need to be concerned about the kind of person they are hiring. It is not enough that they are good in their discipline. How and what they teach makes all the difference.

These are complex matters, to be sure, and it is easy to be misunderstood. But at stake are fundamental epistemological issues concerning the very nature of the university. As MacIntyre argues in the concluding chapter of *Three Rival Versions of Morality*, when universities gave up religious tests, the consequence was not that universities then became places of ordered conflict among rival traditions. Rather, when the appointment of university faculty excluded belief from consideration, a different but equally exclusive conception of scholarly competence was enforced in making appointments, a conception of competence independent of standpoint. A corresponding conception of objectivity in the classroom required professors to present what they taught as if shared standards of rationality were accepted by everyone. Universities, therefore, became institutions committed to upholding a fictitious objectivity.

In recent years, deconstructionists have come along to challenge the objectivist viewpoint. The natural response of those in the Enlightenment university is to dismiss these critics because they "are not objective." They certainly are not. Deconstructionists are saying what we Christians should have been saying all along: *there is no objective knowledge apart from the traditions that sustain it.* In this instance, that institution is the church. Yet, of late, what has distinguished Christian universities is the claim that they are doing everything that other universities are doing—except they require courses in theology. Unfortunately, this approach cannot help but make God appear as the "God of the gaps."

When Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) was reforming English universities under the impetus of Enlightenment rationality, he found that universities depended upon constrained agreements; that is, before you could even enter the conversation, you had to locate yourself within the Christian tradition, even if in dissent. Sidgwick, as reported by MacIntyre, objected to such "constrained agreements" as antithetical to the scientific method and thus reason. Of course, his assumptions about science have proved to be wrong; we have subsequently learned that science depends upon such constrained agreements. I know of no physicist or astronomer who is all that interested in astrology. Yet there is no scientific reason in itself for excluding it. Nonetheless, Sidgwick excluded theology because theology depends upon constrained agreement. According to Sidgwick, the university can only make room for those disciplines, like science, that depend on unconstrained agreements. As a result, MacIntyre argues that no genuine disagreements ever get raised in the contemporary university. The university has become an institution where civility has

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become an end in itself.

In contrast, I would like the contemporary university to be a place where what MacIntyre calls "constrained disagreements" might occur. For it to be such a place, we would need, for example, to form students in the tradition of learning—and taking seriously—the different ways in which Jews and Christians understand the Hebrew Scripture or Old Testament. Then you would really have a conflict. You would not just be learning about conflict; you would be in conflict.

As it now stands, we do not have arguments in the university. Yet I maintain that universities sponsored by the church have a stake in initiating the young into their tradition as well as into the conflict of traditions that we now know as modernity. That requires our institutions to initiate students into traditions that we think worthy. These traditions should be taken seriously because they deal with matters on which we hang our lives. In terms of my second claim, I think that universities, and in particular Christian universities, are those that insist that honor is an absolutely essential ingredient for the furtherance of what we care about in initiating youth into those traditions which we believe embody honor itself.

3. The fact that we have an honor code, or should have an honor code, at a university does not mean that we are a corrupt community or institution.

There is a widely prevalent view that honor is a good thing, but we should have no code of enforcement procedure. Those who cheat, according to this view, only cheat themselves; they do not hurt me. Most honor codes at universities fall apart on the assumption that, although I do not want to cheat, if I catch someone else cheating, I will not turn in that person because I do not want to be someone who rats on other people. I do not want to be a police officer.

This denial of the importance of honor codes and the corresponding enforcement implies a rather positive view of our character; namely, that most people are going to do the right thing given the opportunity. However, as Christians, we should realize that, if most of us are given an opportunity, we will certainly do wrong and, even more, we must learn to call that sin. That is the reason we need other people to help keep us honest. We need one another to be good, and that is what we signal to one another through an honor code.

But sins, I will admit, can become an excuse for terrible forms of coercion, and strictures against sin often tend to blot out the goods that the strictures hope to serve. Not cheating on an exam can become so important that we forget that the negative prohibition draws on the deeper commitment to honor in the first place.

Honor codes are necessary. Good communities and institutions need to find ways to remind themselves of what they are about as well as to give initiates a sense of those forms of life that make the community what it is. Codes, to be sure, can become simply law if they are divorced from the practices that give them moral intelligibility. But we must not underestimate the importance of such codes for articulating those practices that we think are crucial to the life of the university. Restraint is one way the community has of embodying its good.

4. If students do not cheat, if they do not use someone else's material on a test, or do not use material in a paper without due acknowledgment, it does not necessarily follow that they are persons of honor—but it is not a bad place to start.

A person of honor can be trusted to stay true to convictions even when those convictions do not pay. Honor implies an elitist ethic, which should not surprise us, since universities are elitist institutions. Students have been called to an activity to which not all are called, and because of that they are held to a standard and hold themselves to a standard to which not all are held. Honor is not just a restraint. The university honors those who exemplify what we are about.

For example, at Duke University, we have a professor who has spent his whole adult life doing nothing but study lemurs. Lemurs are small primates found on the island of Madagascar. They are slowly being decimated by the destruction of the rain forests. This professor is honored throughout the entire university because he has given his life to understanding and saving lemurs. You might say, "When children are starving in Ethiopia, how can you set aside someone to study lemurs? What are the moral presuppositions which allow you to do that?" We do this because lemurs are worth saving. Of course, starving children in Ethiopia ought to be fed; but what universities are about, given our commitments, includes the study of lemurs. We also set aside people who do nothing but patiently study the christological debates of the fourth century. Others try to understand the condition of women. Challenges to our past modes of understanding are honored by the university. Moral virtues are required for the willingness to stand before what we do not know—before a lemur, before christology, before the marginalization of women—without becoming satisfied with easy solutions.

It is worthwhile to consider the relationship between the virtues required for what we do at the university and the rest of our moral life. Can one be a scholar without being a good person? We have tried on the whole to avoid that question in the modern university. We have allowed university teaching to become a profession and the university professors to become professionals, by which it is understood that they can deliver the goods without respect to the kinds of people they are. About the only thing for which anyone is

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fired today is coercive sexual harassment. You certainly cannot be fired for laziness. But university professors steal when they go into a classroom unprepared. That is not honorable behavior. It becomes absolutely crucial, therefore, for faculties to be able to police themselves in order to maintain universities as honorable institutions, where we can say to someone, "You may not abuse alcohol in a way that absolutely abrogates your ability to teach."

Moreover, there can be no divorce of the classroom from the lives of students in the dormitories and the lives of the professors at their homes. The true test of a university is: are alumni reading a book a month forty-five years after they graduated from college? Do they feel the need to go back and read *The Republic* as business executives, doctors, and lawyers? If the university does not have that effect, it is not performing its task well. There can and should be no divorce between the classroom and the dorm. To be sure, not cheating on a test is a minimum, but it is a good minimum to remind us of what we are about as a community of learning in which members care for one another.

5. The most compassionate thing you can do as a Christian is to turn in someone for cheating.

As I noted, most honor systems founder on the statement, "I will not cheat myself, but I could not turn anyone else in if I caught them cheating. After all, they only hurt themselves." The problem with this attitude is that it embodies the kind of individualism that is underwritten by a capitalist society: "I can do what I want to do so long as I don't hurt anybody else and I play by the rules." On the contrary, in institutions of honor, you owe it to those cheating to turn them in. For you must remember that you are not protecting yourself; you are reminding persons who cheat that they are betraying what they care about in terms of their being at that institution. Of course, the consequence is excommunication, but excommunication is the most gracious act the church ever performs. Without excommunication, how would you ever know that you are leading a life that cuts you off from the community of grace? We do exactly the same thing in the university when we turn one another in, report one another, and say thereby you need help. It reminds us what the university is about.

Still it will be said that we do not live in a world of honor. Obviously, the kinds of criticisms that I have made about the contemporary university and the contemporary church indicate severely compromised communities. How can we hold ourselves or anyone else to standards that it seems no one believes in? To that I say, "If you believe that, the game's up." We cannot afford not to be courageous in a world of cowards. But if you are courageous in a world of cowards, your life is going to be more dangerous. If you are truthful in a world of mendacious people, you had better expect to be in a fight. Even as we cannot afford not to be courageous in a world of cowards, we cannot afford not to be honorable in a world of dishonor. This brings me to my last claim.

6. If you think you can cheat at the university because this is just preparation for the real world, you will never be prepared for the real world.

It does not get any more real than this if you believe that these activities are as important as I have tried to suggest. I am not going to explain this point, because if it still needs explaining, then there is nothing more to be said. FT

Paraphrase of Some Famous Lines in Spanish Literature

I will become dust and you will become dust
and ashes our tongues and ashes our eyes
but, ever beloved and empassioned dust,
our embers will last as long as the skies.

Anthony Kerrigan

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Theology Through the Looking Glass

Richard E. Wentz

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass,* Alice has been having quite a run through the Garden of Live Flowers. "I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!" she says. "There ought to be some men moving about somewhere—and so there are!" Alice gets excited by all this. "It's a great huge game of chess that's being played—all over the world—if this *is* the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I *wish* I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join—though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best."

And so the real Queen, the Red Queen, takes Alice in hand, leading her on in the direction of the Eighth Square where she will become Queen. After a lot of running and getting nowhere, they finally stop; and the Queen begins to set pegs in the ground and measure off the rest of the squares. "A Pawn goes two squares in its first move you know, so you'll go *very* quickly through the Third Square—by railway, I should think—and you'll find yourself in the Fourth Square in no time. Well, *that* square belongs to Tweedledum and Tweedledee—the Fifth is mostly water—the Sixth belongs to Humpty Dumpty." The Queen pauses to chide Alice for her lack of response, then continues: "The Seventh Square is all forest—however, one of the Knights will show you the way—and in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun!" At the next peg the Queen turns again, and this time she says, "Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing—turn out your toes as you walk—and remember who you are!"

Alice's Adventures in Wonder Land and *Through the Looking Glass* contain the workings of what is for me an effective understanding of language. They should constitute required reading for students in universities. Most faculty should memorize them. "Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing—turn out your toes as you walk—and remember who you are!"

There you have it. The assertion of a principle—that there is a language that is neither functional (at least in the primary sense) nor essential. It just *is.* It is beyond the ordinariness of language. It is "other" than the way language is ordinarily used. Ordinary language is utilitarian; it is the "English for a thing." "Speak in French" when English just can't make it—when you just can't find the English for the purpose. "Speak in French" because ordinary language won't do; what you want to be able to say has no real *usefulness,* other than the fact that you need to say it.

There is here an acknowledgment of the fact that life is not functional, although it encompasses many functions. Life is not functional, although it may be reduced to function by a functional mind. Yet even for the utilitarian mind there are the occasions when a declaration of independence is called for, when life is encountered as more than the sum of its parts. There are occasions when an assertion of freedom, of transcendence, is forthcoming. Now, of course, it is true that "French" is someone else's language. Yet for you it is not ordinary language. It is a language to which you are to resort when ordinary language won't do. Ordinary language has become powerless, incapable of doing what is necessary. Another language, learned in order to assert itself when ordinary language is powerless, becomes the occasion of a different kind of power.

This "French," this language of superordinary power, is a transcendent tongue, used in moments for the declaration of freedom. As such it provides a model for interreligious dialogue as well as for traditional theology. In realms of the history of religions, it may help us to understand how the "French" of another religious tradition may serve us in the moment when the tradition too close to us ("English") has become

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commonplace. In this essay, we shall limit ourselves to comment about "French" as the language of theology, asserted in the moments of ordinary powerlessness.

I

If it is true that all language is power, that there is no power without language, then there seems to be evidence in human history of a kind of language which cries out. It says, No, wait! That's not all there is; there is more! In Pure Land Buddhism it amounts to a recognition that there is "other-power," that *self*-power has come to a frustrating dead end, that it was presumptuous and wrong-headed for the self to assume it was ever doing anything more than objectifying the content of its own whimsy.

In other words, the realization of the limitation of self-power causes a change in language. Self-power makes language utilitarian, designed to serve its objectifying proposals. However, when the world constructed by self-power seems to self-destruct or fails to yield what we had hoped for, we find ourselves doing strange and very non-utilitarian things. Our language cries out, it prays, it meditates. In so doing it acknowledges the truth that life is "other-power," not self-power. No longer do I speak in a way that makes utilitarian sense to a world dominated by self-power. Instead I speak words that are foolishness to such a world. I speak a theological word. I speak in French because the English won't do.

The Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime informs us that philosophy must become "metanoetics." That is to say, it must transcend metaphysics, speculation, and the purely intellectual. Ordinary philosophy is utilitarian manipulation of the things the mind objectifies. Ordinary philosophy is noetic; it is self-power at its keenest; but it does not understand the fact that life is more than self-power. "My power," writes Tanabe, "by itself alone, is so ineffective, and my folly and wickedness so tenacious, that if left to myself, I could not perform even this *zange* [this sorrowful recognition of my ineffective self]. Nevertheless, the *tariki* (other-power) that acts within me exercises its power in a way so overwhelming that it obliges me to perform *zange*." Tanabe's thought has helped me to clarify my own notion of appositional power, which I have pondered for a long while.

II

I remember many years ago reading a novel by Oliver LaFarge called *Laughing Boy*, a tale of a young Native American lad. I can recall the plot only vaguely. The boy was in serious trouble; if I remember correctly, he had committed a murder. In the anguish and torment that followed, he fled and finally wound up at home, in the special lands of his people. As he stood gazing at the beauty in which he had once walked, he found traditional words welling up inside him; he looked to the valley in the shadow of the buttes, and (I remember the words of the author) "it was apposite."

What did that phrase mean? It meant that life is not self-power, but other-power. When something is apposite, it is parenthetical. It stands next to, and in relationship to, something else, *sharing what it is*, to the end that identification and clarification take place. The appositional is "otherness," it is the fullness of the "other" sharing itself. When the young lad stood before the beauty of his native lands, he was moved to express the helplessness of the utilitarian world of self-power in which he had been submerged. It was already Tanabe's *tariki*, drawing him into the "more than" of existence. It was an appositional moment, in which language found a new and different word—spoken in an essentially different dimension.

This word, appropriate to *tariki*, to the appositional shape of human experience, has traditionally been known as a theological word. That was, of course, in a much more homogeneous moment in our history, when theology was part of the intellectual integrity of the society and culture. More recently, theology has come to mean the intellectual clarification and communication of the idea-structure of *a* (any) religion, the articulation of metaphysics, or, for that matter, of any view of ultimate reality

I use it in a manner more in harmony with the usage of Eastern Christianity, where theology is neither speculation nor doctrinal exposition. Vladimir Lossky, in his *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, reminds his readers that theology does not think *of* or *about* something—say a concept of God or of creation; theology, rather, thinks *by means of* revelation. In other words, theology is thinking by means of the perception of *tariki*, other-power. The theological word is spoken as appositional power. The theological word is not like the utilitarian word of ordinary existence. It proceeds from the discovery that self-power has come to an end, the discovery that something, someone, some reality, stands in appositional relationship to us, revealing the truth that life is other than it seems, more than we know. Lossky writes: "The philosophy which speculates on God starts . . . from an idea. For the theologian, the point of departure is Christ, and it is also the point of arrival."

I should say, parenthetical to the rest of Lossky's statement, that the reader must at this point suspend his assumption about who or what Christ is and means. For, as a matter of fact, this Christ is the personal dimension of other-power. To speak of "Christ" is not to refer to someone whom one compares with philosophers or other religious leaders. Instead, to speak of Christ is an appreciative awareness that the instrument of observation is a key to understanding the nature of what is observed. The observing instrument is the human person. When the *person* discovers the futility of self-power and finds it fulfilled by a *giving*

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other-power, he is discovering something personal. Whatever else other-power is, it is personal. It can be nothing less, ultimately nothing more. To speak of Christ in this way is to say that reality is Christ-nature—reality is other-power, standing in appositional relation to us, sharing itself even unto its own death and rising. Other-power dies as it gives itself to us; but other-power is person that is *more than* person—at least as we know person; in its dying is its rising foretold.

In keeping with Lossky's discussion of the nature of theology, we may say that theology is thinking with the mind of Christ—thinking with other-power, thinking appositionally. The language of the mind of Christ is not the ordinary utilitarian language of self-power. It cries out. It is the voice of the poet and the artist. It is speaking in French when you can't think of the English for a thing; speaking in French because French is the only way to say it. This is why Lossky can write:

> Philosophers construct an idea of God [self-power]. For the *theologian*, God is someone who reveals Himself and who cannot be known outside of revelation [other-power]. One must open oneself to this personal God, to encounter Him in a total involvement: that is the only way to know Him [apposition]. But this concrete and personal God *contains* the abstract and impersonal God of philosophers who is not, most often, a mere mirage, but also a reflection in human thought of the personal God.

Speaking in French is like a declaration of freedom, of liberation. It says, try as you will, you cannot keep me captive and domesticated in the utilitarian prisons of the ordinary world of self-power. You cannot because I have seen with the imagination that reality is more than that. This is why Oliver LaFarge's Laughing Boy discovers the apposite power of his native landscape. It is why the Hebrew Psalmist cries out, "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence my help comes"; why he intones, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." It is also why, in the Christian Gospel according to Matthew, Simon bar Jonas cries out, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"; why St. Paul laments, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Thomas Merton makes the same point in a different manner:

> In the writings of Chuang Tzu there's a piece called "The Woodcarver":
>
> Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand of precious wood. When it was finished, all who saw it were astounded. They said it must be the work of spirits. The Prince of Lu said to the master carver, "What is your secret?"
>
> Khing replied: "I am only a workman. I have no secret. There is only this: when I began to think about the work you commanded I guarded my spirit, did not expend it on trifles that were not to the point. I fasted in order to set my heart at rest. After three days of fasting, I had forgotten gain and success. After five days I had forgotten gain or criticism. After seven days I had forgotten my body with all its limbs.
>
> "By this time all thought of your Highness and the court had faded away. All that might distract me from my work had vanished. I was collected in the single thought of the bell stand. Then I went to the forest to see the trees in their own natural state. When the right tree appeared before my eyes, the bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt. All I had to do was to put forth my hand and begin. If I had not met this particular tree there would have been no bell stand at all. What happened? My own collected thought encountered the hidden potential in the wood; from this *live* encounter came the work which you ascribe to the spirits."

The mediocre artisan, the conventionalized scientist, professor, priest, or artist—these proceed according to fixed rules and standards, the generation of self-power that has become the pride of modernity, the indoctrination of an unfree mind. But the one who creates the bell stand has been freed by other-power—he proceeds from a hidden and appositional principle "which, in fasting, detachment, forgetfulness of results, and abandonment of all hope of profit, discovers precisely the tree that is waiting to have this particular work carved from it." Nonsense? Absolutely—nonsense! "Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing, turn out your toes when you walk, and remember who you are." Nonsense. But true. At least that is the testimony of the theological word. Nonsense to the mind of self-power which fails to acknowledge the appositional character of reality—that the right way is beyond *self*-conscious reflection. The attachment to method and system is as old as Confucianism and older. It is as new as the modern university. It is the end of wisdom and the trivialization of existence.

What we fail to understand is what the appositional power of the theological word reminds us of—that method, system, argument from premises to conclusions, debate are at their best when they are part of the playfulness of a mind that is not attached to any of the "fixed rules and standards" that become the preoccupation of the mediocre artisan. When these rules and standards function within the objectifying world of self-power, *self*-consciousness, they build prisons for the human spirit.

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Whether all this is true or not may be beside the point. The point is, this is the way the theological word operates. It is a discourse of other-power. As such it plays a prophetic role in relationship to the individual-in-community. The theological word stands in contrast to the language of self-power, and is not to be judged by the standards of self-power. It judges, transcends, and redeems the world of self-power. It is a word that is marginal to the conventionalized realms of existence—except, of course, as it becomes conventionalized by the human condition of trivialization that is constantly trying to control reality by democratization, the reduction of reality to the mediocre, the lowest common denominator.

III

American religious history offers a telling illustration of the manner in which the theological word speaks on behalf of an other-power that calls religion *itself* into judgment as an instrument of mediocrity, conventionalization, and self-power.

Beginning in the last decade of the eighteenth century, revivalistic evangelicalism became a major shaper of American religion and culture. The new nation faced the question of how to secure the essential spiritual and moral solidarity of the Republic without effecting an establishment of religion. No denomination could function as the "church." Religious freedom meant pluralism, and pluralism, in turn, meant both sectarianism and denominationalism. In the new America the conception of the church was transformed from a doctrine to a function. As Professor John Smylie has put it: "The denominational church, as [Americans] saw it, was not for them the new Israel of God's elect. It was a voluntary society, perhaps the most important among others, but hardly the organ through which God made his ultimate historical demands and offered his fullest earthly rewards." And so, in such a situation, the nation itself came to function more and more as the church. Historians like Sidney E. Mead have shown how evangelical Protestantism easily merged with this new religion of the Republic.

Evangelical Protestantism refers, of course, to those well-established traditions of Reformation and Pietistic origin (such as Methodism) that were able to accept their denominational status and still find a way to support the common religious needs of the nation. To many Protestant leaders, such as the nineteenth-century patriarch Lyman Beecher, America was to be the setting in which the designs of Providence were to be fulfilled. This was to be the nation with "full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty . . . [where] the trump of jubilee will sound, and earth's debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' "

This nineteenth-century Protestantism had been conceived in the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. It was a Protestantism that had given voice to the people and overthrown many of the theological and ecclesiastical traditions of the European heritage of Christendom. The Great Awakening had given religious power to the revolution that was taking place in America, the revolution that was to be symbolically sealed by the War for Independence. The Awakening had been a democratizing force and Protestantism adapted readily to its expectations. By the early nineteenth century this Protestantism was being expressed in the forms of revivalistic evangelicalism.

The assumptions of this new consciousness are today so much a part of our religious culture that they seem almost self-evident, certainly commonplace. They hold: that religion is basically a salvific experience for the individual; that the individual must repent of his sins, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as personal savior, and experience the joy of rebirth; that the Bible is an important private agent in this transformation process; that transformation of individuals is essential to the moral order of society; that certain measures must be developed to provide individuals with the opportunity for transformation; that among these measures is a form of proclamation or preaching which must be personally directed to the precarious nature of individual existence; and that this transformation process will provide initiation into the moral order of the new nation and will prevent descent into barbarism.

These are the assumptions of revivalistic evangelicalism, the religious consciousness which is shared in its sacred *and secular* forms by most Americans even today. Revivalistic evangelicalism represents the Americanization of Christianity, Protestantism adapting itself to the religious needs of a "nation with the soul of a church." Virtually all American denominations were affected by this Americanization. Even the history of American Roman Catholicism bears the marks of revivalistic evangelicalism.

However, there were those who began to resist this Americanization. Their resistance did not take the form of prophetic judgment against the social injustice to be found in the new society. Instead it was theological judgment against the self-power at the heart of the new American religious consciousness. Although few revivalistic Evangelicals would have denied that salvation and moral improvement were according to God's plan, the direction of the American consciousness was narcissistic and utilitarian. It focused on the lone individual seeking justification for his own aims and desires, seeking an experience that would satisfy the need for solace and success in this life or the life to come.

One of those who resisted this Americanization was the nineteenth-century theologian John Williamson Nevin. Nevin had been brought up in Old School Presbyterianism and educated at Princeton. After teaching for a time at Western Theological Seminary

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in Pittsburgh, he began to question the authenticity of the new religious consciousness. Although he did not perceive the weakness of its trivializing moralism, he did realize that the theology of his day was too fascinated with immediate experience and too attached to spiritual self-aggrandizement. Nevin read European and British philosophy, theology, and historical studies. He discovered the Catholic substance of Christianity, long neglected in the advancing march of rationalism and evangelical Protestantism.

In that substance he encountered theological language as other-power. In the creeds, the early fathers, and even the Reformers of the sixteenth century, Nevin stood before a mystery that, in his own mind, revealed the failure of self-power religion and offered itself in appositional power. He discovered something organic, social, and dynamic, a shared reality greater than the utilitarian consciousness of emergent America. He learned that the reality of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church encompassed far more than the voluntary association of believers that characterized American Christianity.

In the language of Catholicism (not confined to Roman Catholicism) Nevin discovered appositional power. He discovered other-power that could be expressed in no other language. "Quackery," he wrote, "consists in pretension to an inward virtue or power, which is not possessed in fact, on the ground of a mere show of strength which such power or virtue is supposed to include. . . . The religion of the world has always been, for the most part, arrant quackery." Revivalistic evangelicalism, the new consciousness, was quackery to Nevin.

> What rude familiarity with the High and Holy One; what low belittling and caricaturing of all that is grand in the Gospel; what gross profanity in the style of many of the petitions with which it is pretended to storm the citadel of God's favors! The atmosphere of . . . a [revival] meeting may be exciting, intoxicating, bewildering; but it has no *power* whatever to dispose the mind to devotion. There is nothing in the scene to impress those who are present with the sense of God's awful, heart-searching presence.

In these comments we observe the evidence of theology as a word about presence, the presence of other-power—something not evident, according to Nevin, in evangelical revivalism. The problem for Nevin is that the new consciousness assumes that "this life is something that stands in the individual separately taken, the property of a particular *self*, rather than a more general *power* in which every such particular self is required to lose itself that 'old things may pass away and all things become new.' "

For Nevin, true Christianity was living in the sacramental reality of the Church, where the attachment of self-power may be overcome by other-power. The Church is Catholic; it is a language-world that communicates a reality that is always more than our knowledge of it, our practice of it, or claims upon it. Living in the Church is living appositionally, living "at home," living in the world with the perception that the ordinariness of the world is filled with sacramental power. "The particular subject lives," wrote Nevin, "not properly speaking in the acts of his own will separately considered, but in the power of a vast generic life that lies wholly beyond his will, and has now begun to manifest itself through him as the law and type of his will itself as well as of his whole being."

Nevin's critique has gone virtually unheeded in the history of American religion and culture. Whether his claims for "Catholicism" as the language of appositional power are true or not, his evaluations of the self-power of American life would seem to be valid. The new religious consciousness holds to this day. A century and a half after Nevin's initial foray, America remains religious, even in its secular forms. We are convinced that whatever is of ultimate significance, providing order and meaning to our existence, is entirely of our doing. Reality, including what some may be willing to call *divine* reality, is immediately available to individual demand. For us, it is never mediated—and it is readily domesticated.

In American culture, the theological word as appositional power seems impossible and unnecessary. We acknowledge no other-power, standing over against and *for* us, transforming the ordinary world of self-power. We have no French to speak of when we can't think of the English for a thing. FT

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Response

Leaping Headfirst Into the *Smith* Trap

Phillip H. Harris

Richard John Neuhaus has joined the chorus of those singing a lament to the death of religious liberty ("Polygamy, Peyote, and the Public Peace," October 1990). The cause of the choir's mournful tune is the Supreme Court's decision in the so-called peyote case, *Employment Division v. Smith*. In that case, Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for himself and four other members of the Court, knocked religious liberty off its rightful pedestal as the "first freedom" and relegated it to the position of a dependent afterthought. As a proponent of the importance of religion in public life, Neuhaus is right to be concerned, even outraged.

At the same time, he must feel a little uncomfortable standing alongside some of the other members of this particular, and rather peculiar, chorus. True, Justice O'Connor is there; she concurred in the result of the case but severely criticized Scalia's reasoning. But Justices Brennan, Blackmun, and Marshall are also there; they dissented. Neuhaus does not often find himself in harmony with that wing of the Court. And outside the Court, the variety of the voices condemning *Smith* becomes downright interesting. There's the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Association of Evangelicals, Concerned Women for America, Agudath Israel, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, National Drug Strategy Network, United Methodist Church, American Humanist Organization, the Baptist Joint Committee, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Association on American Indian Affairs, American Jewish Committee, People for the American Way, American Jewish Congress, and even the American Civil Liberties Union.

The list is not complete. Many other groups and individuals have joined the dirge—too many to list here—and together they represent an immense ("broad" is too limited a word) cross section of American society. Now the members of this strange coalition have decided that the time for lamentation is over; it is time for action. They have made up banners that read "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act" and they are running toward the constitutional trap Justice Scalia set for them.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) has been introduced in the Congress. The bill's express purpose is to overturn by legislative action the Court's decision in *Employment Division v. Smith*. This does not mean the bill would decriminalize the use of peyote by Native Americans as a religious sacrament, which was what the *Smith* case was about. In fact, the RFRA would do nothing to reverse the effect of that decision on the Native Americans affected. The goal of the Act is much broader—it is supposed to create a "statutory right" that will restore religious freedom in the United States. This miracle will occur, according to the sponsors, "without tampering with the Bill of Rights."

This congressional effort to correct the Court's misguided reinterpretation of the First Amendment is understandable, but the method is probably unconstitutional, and definitely dangerous. It is precisely the sort of legislative control over religion that the *Smith* opinion invites. Justice Scalia must be surprised, and a little amused, that the proposed "solution" to the problem he has created is the very result he

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welcomed:

> It may fairly be said that leaving accommodation [of religion] to the political process will place at a relative disadvantage those religious practices that are not widely engaged in; but that unavoidable consequence of democratic government must be preferred to a system in which each conscience is a law unto itself or in which judges weigh the social importance of all laws against the centrality of all religious beliefs.

Richard Neuhaus calls this sentence from the *Smith* opinion "one of the more chilling, not to say callous, observations in the history of the Supreme Court." He recognizes the danger in "throw[ing] what were previously thought to be constitutionally protected rights to the will of the majority." Why, then, are so many diverse religious, political, social, and legal groups turning to Congress, to the political process, to the "will of the majority" for relief from *Smith,* while claiming to seek protection for the rights of religious minorities?

Having posed the question, it is in actuality impossible to discern the motivations of each of the diverse groups backing the RFRA. Their constituencies are too dissimilar, their agendas too varied, their usual goals too different, even conflicting. What seems most likely is that each of the member groups in this eclectic coalition has different, possibly contradictory, expectations of what the legislation will accomplish. If that is the case, and if the RFRA becomes law, then most of those supporting the Act are going to be disappointed with its results.

One possible result of Congress adopting, and the President signing, RFRA is that it will be declared unconstitutional. The bill says that Congress or any other "governmental authority *may restrict any person's free exercise of religion* . . ." and then sets out a test that such restrictions must meet. The test is addressed below, but this statutory language must first be compared to the wording of the First Amendment itself:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

It is difficult to imagine a more obvious violation of the ban against laws "prohibiting the free exercise" of religion than a law that specifically allows such restrictions, even if there are some limits to the authority of governments to enact them. A lawsuit challenging the RFRA would seem to be an easier case for the Supreme Court to resolve than were the recent "flag-burning" cases. With the RFRA, the Court will need no interpretive maneuvers to find religion constitutionally protected as it did to find small fires covered by the phrase "freedom of speech." So the RFRA, if it comes to that, will probably be declared unconstitutional. If it is not (if Justice Scalia's quoted proposition regarding legislative accommodation is upheld), religious liberty may suffer even more than as things now stand.

If the RFRA did survive constitutional attack under the First Amendment, it would be because the Act does contain some express limitations on governmental authority over religion. According to the bill, any restriction on the free exercise of religion is valid only if:

> (1) it is in the form of a rule of general applicability; and
> (2) it does not intentionally discriminate against religion, or among religions; and
> (3) the governmental authority demonstrates that application of the restriction to the person—
> (a) is essential to further a compelling governmental interest; and
> (b) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

This test is being praised by the backers of the RFRA as duplicating the "compelling state interest" standard that the Supreme Court applied to free exercise cases before the *Smith* decision. This claim raises at least two concerns.

First, it is not a constitutional standard, it is a statutory formulation. Being statutory, it is subject to the whim of future Congresses. It can be modified or eliminated, broadened or narrowed, depending on how each session of the legislature wants to interpret the statute. The courts, in applying the statute, would be required to determine legislative intent, not constitutional mandate, and those are two very different things. If Congress declared that something is a "compelling state interest," that declaration, being an expression of legislative intent, would necessarily prevail. With a statutory formulation, there is no basis for courts to make independent constitutional (and presumably less biased) appraisals of those concerns that compel Congress to act.

This brings us to the second and more important reason that enacting a statute resembling the Court's free exercise test does not bode well for religious freedom. The fact is that when courts have applied the "compelling state interest" standard in the past, religiously required exemptions from laws of general applicability have not done well at all. That this is true was forcefully documented in a recent dissenting opinion written by Judge John Noonan of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The 1988 case in which Judge Noonan's opinion appears

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is *E.E.O.C. v. Townley Engineering Company*, a case in which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission successfully prevented a company from requiring employee attendance at weekly devotional services in the plant on company time. Judge Noonan points out that the employee was not required to participate in or even listen to the services; he then recounts the historical record of free exercise claims under the Court's "compelling state interest" standard:

> Remarkably and regrettably when Congress has found a national interest to be of sufficient importance to be incorporated into federal legislation and that legislation has conflicted with the free exercise of religion, the Supreme Court of the United States has uniformly found the national interest to outweigh the claims of conscience and permitted Congress to prohibit the free exercise of religion in conflict with the legislation.

This dismal record applies not just to the Supreme Court but to other federal courts as well. Attached to the opinion is a lengthy appendix of additional cases where free exercise claims have been rejected by the courts. Judge Noonan proffers one possible explanation for the results in these cases:

> Secular men and women take secular values seriously. Men and women of the world believe that the world's business is important. When Congress elevates this business to a national priority it has been all too easy for officers of the government and even judges to ignore the countervailing command of the Constitution.

And they have used "compelling state interest" to justify their denial of constitutional guarantees. Yet the groups pushing the RFRA want to enact that test into law and leave its interpretation and application to those same "officers of the government" who have thus far shown no preference for religious liberty.

Two centuries of judicial interpretation of the United States Constitution have demonstrated that when the Supreme Court veers off course in a particular case or series of cases, continued constitutional litigation over the issue involved serves to correct their heading. An opinion that is too broadly stated, such as the *Smith* opinion, gets narrowed by subsequent opinions in related cases. An opinion based on a unique factual situation, such as sacramental use of peyote during a national drug epidemic, gets distinguished from other cases involving different circumstances. Sometimes a Supreme Court case, maybe the *Smith* case, just gets ignored in subsequent opinions as though it never occurred. And occasionally, as with the infamous Dred Scott decision or with *Roe v. Wade*, a case is decided so wrongly that it is or eventually will be overruled.

It is not a perfect system, this process of constitutional adjudication, but it has worked, does work, and will continue to work for the preservation of our constitutional rights. It never works as fast as those immediately affected need it to, but legislative fixes are not fast nor are they permanent. They require interpretation and application through the same judicial system, and they can be modified or eliminated at any time by the legislature that enacted them.

One of the primary objections to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act is that its enactment into law would terminate the process of constitutional litigation over the application of the Free Exercise Clause. Subsequent religious freedom cases would be decided under the RFRA, not the Constitution. Courts avoid constitutional decisions whenever a case can be statutorily resolved. This means that cases seeking to limit, distinguish, ignore, or overrule *Smith* would never get their constitutional claims addressed. The courts would simply apply the RFRA with its "compelling state interest" test, and, if history is any guide, the claims of religious liberty would lose. In the meantime, the case of *Employment Division v. Smith* would be forever enshrined as the Supreme Court's last word on the Free Exercise Clause—a chilling prospect indeed.

One encouraging sign that lower courts will find ways to protect religious freedom in spite of *Smith* appeared as recently as last August in Minnesota in a case entitled *State of Minnesota v. French*. Relying on the 1888 U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Maynard v. Hill*—an opinion which characterized marriage as "the foundation of family and society, without which there would be neither civilization nor progress"—the Minnesota Supreme Court observed that:

> This generation does not have a monopoly on either knowledge or wisdom. Before abandoning fundamental values and institutions, we must pause and take stock of our present social order: millions of drug abusers; rampant child abuse; a rising underclass without marketable job skills; children roaming the streets; children with only one parent or no parent at all; and children growing up with no one to guide them in developing any set of values. How can we expect anything else when the state itself contributes, by arguments of this kind, to further erosion of fundamental institutions that have formed the foundation of our civilization for centuries.

The argument "of this kind" being advanced by the State of Minnesota was that a landlord's exercise of his sincere religious beliefs, by refusing to rent to an unmarried cohabitating couple, constitutes "marital status" discrimination for which the landlord should be punished. Questioning how the State could

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have a "compelling interest" in protecting an activity that violates its own fornication statutes, the court overturned administrative and lower-court determinations that had assessed civil fines against the landlord for compensatory damages and for allegedly causing mental anguish to the unmarried couple who wanted to rent his house.

When confronted with federal constitutional arguments by the State based on the *Smith* decision, the Minnesota court deftly sidestepped the issue. "In light of the unforeseeable changes in established first amendment law set forth in recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court," the court said, "justice demands that we analyze the present case in light of the protections found in the Minnesota Constitution." The State's own constitution, the opinion then declared, "treats religious liberty as more important than the formation of government."

Does this mean that we should now turn to state constitutions exclusively for protection of fundamental American freedoms? No, but it does illustrate that the courts are capable of responding to the demands of justice despite one Supreme Court opinion to the contrary. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act can only hinder that uniquely judicial process. Judge Noonan says that when weighing "the claims of Congress" against the claims of religious liberty, there should not be "a tilt in favor of Congress." Justice Scalia has now put his thumb on the legislative side of the scale; instead of removing the imbalance, the backers of the RFRA are effectively saying that they are willing to try to use those scales themselves. Can there be any doubt who is going to get short-weighted in this exercise?

(Richard John Neuhaus replies in "The Public Square.")

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Books In Review

J in Bloom

THE BOOK OF J. Translated from the Hebrew by DAVID ROSENBERG. Interpreted by HAROLD BLOOM. *Grove Weidenfeld. 340 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by **Joseph Blenkinsopp**

THE J OF THE title was discovered in 1711 by Henning Bernhard Witter, an obscure Lutheran pastor of Hildesheim, so obscure, in fact, that his role in the naming of this source of the Pentateuch was only rediscovered in the present century by the French biblical scholar Adolphe Lods. In the writings of Witter and the host of others after him who held that the Pentateuch resulted from the combination of several continuous narrative sources, J and its somewhat nebulous *Doppelgänger* E never emerged as individual authors in their own right. More often than not, in fact, these and the other narrative strands were thought of as the products of an anonymous committee or school.

In the period between the world wars, however, and especially in the writings of another Lutheran theologian, the Heidelberg professor Gerhard von Rad invoked by Bloom, J began to emerge as an individual, a theologian of surpassing originality, the finest product of what von Rad called the Solomonic enlightenment. Theologies of J began to be written, and attempts were made by the more adventurous to break the barrier of anonymity. The French scholar Henri Cazelles, for example, thought it might have been Ahimaaz, son of Zadok the priest and Davidic loyalist, while others looked elsewhere among the rich cast of characters in the annals of David and Solomon.

Harold Bloom's proposal, perhaps suggested by a rather casual remark in Richard Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987), is that J was written by a woman of high social standing, probably of the blood royal, at the court of Rehoboam, inept successor to Solomon. The translator, David Rosenberg, goes out further along the same limb by revealing her age: she was a woman in her early forties, old enough to be experienced in the ways of the world and the whims of a wayward deity, but not too old to have lost her appetite for life.

Bloom depends for his identification of the female voice in J on the description of the creation of the woman in Genesis, so much more detailed and technically advanced than that of the man (Yahweh, he says, got it right the second time around), on the rendering of heroine figures in the story, the Kafkaesque subtleties and ironies, and most of all on his own intuition after a lifetime of Bible reading. One is reminded of Robert Graves' *Homer's Daughter,* published in 1955, in which, following a suggestion of Samuel Butler, he presented Nausicaa as the author of the Odyssey in an engaging fictional autobiography.

Bloom is more circumspect than Graves in not, for example, looking for mistakes a woman would be likely to make (e.g., putting a rudder at the prow of a ship) or reconstructing the feminine subculture of a male-dominated society. He is aware of the dangers of gender stereotyping involved in his proposal, and puts up some defensive outworks against anticipated feminist criticism. He is also prepared to admit that this is his fiction, but one to which he is as entitled as the scholars are to their historical-critical fictions.

THE FACT REMAINS, however, that the whole point of translating and commenting on just this narrative material and no other—even down to the splitting of verses between J and another source, generally E or P—is postulated on this particular critical theory being correct. In this respect, his approach is very different from that of another distinguished literary critic, Robert Alter, author of *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* who deprecates what he calls the excavative techniques of professional biblical scholarship and works with the text as it is, in its final form.

It is somewhat ironic that the authors should set out to rescue from neglect this highly placed and vastly talented lady, versed in the ways of the world, *entre deux ages,* at a time when the documentary hypothesis can no longer be taken for granted, when the extent, the date, and even the existence of J as an independent, continuous narrative are being widely questioned. And even for those who still work within the documentary paradigm, the identification of J becomes very problematic when we move out of Genesis. With respect to the Sinai narrative, for example, where the authors follow one of several options, a contemporary scholar, Lothar Perlitt, has stated that source division might as well be done by drawing straws.

Bloom, who, as he himself informs us, is neither a believer nor a historian, is convinced that he is restoring a text covered over by centuries of institutionalized misreading. One result is that the character of J's deity, a male deity rather less mature and sophisticated than J herself, has been suppressed or transformed by the established religions. The believer who accords these texts a privileged religious status is, therefore, no longer in a position to understand what they are really saying for, as Bloom puts it, "when script becomes Scripture, reading is numbed by taboo and inhibition."

Curiously, this position is similar to that of the great Julius Wellhausen, whose *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel,* published over a century ago, put the

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documentary hypothesis on a firm footing and set the agenda of Old Testament studies down to the present. Wellhausen lamented the Judaizing of the past by the official historians and the "denaturing" (*Denaturierung*) of early Israelite religion by the priestly and scribal representatives of the post-exilic theocracy. Something like this typically late-nineteenth-century theory of development, no longer in favor, seems to have inspired Bloom's attempt to rescue J from oblivion.

Translator Rosenberg, a poet and former editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society, sets out to break with the smooth clichés, awkward idioms, and undistinguished style that he finds in other modern translations. While there are numerous points of disagreement in detail among source critics as to what is or is not J, he follows a fairly standard breakdown, such as can be found in any of the critical Introductions to the Old Testament, with a few modifications of his own, especially in the Joseph story. His is certainly different from other recent versions, the closest to it perhaps being Everett Fox's translation of Genesis and Exodus. Abandoning the standard chapter and verse divisions, he sets out J's narrative in continuous prose, redividing it into 178 paragraphs according to what he takes to be the natural breaks in the story. While several, perhaps most, of the source critics trace the J source down to the occupation of the land, understood as the honoring of a commitment made to the ancestors, Rosenberg ends with the death of Moses and his burial in an unmarked grave.

THEORIES of translation vary from the very literal to the very paraphrastic. Rosenberg is clearly at the paraphrastic end of the band, freeing himself from what he calls "literal word for word slavery" in order to render the syntactical and contextual nuances, the assonance and word play, that characterize J's narrative style. He has the advantage over many other translators of familiarity with creative writing in modern Hebrew, and therefore of a certain feel for the language. The approach he has adopted is clearly not without risks, and the result reads more like an updated midrash or targum than a translation in any generally accepted sense. I suspect also that some readers will find the determination to be different rather too obtrusive, the language at times too contrived and artful.

In the first section, for example, corresponding to the Garden of Eden story (Genesis 2:4b-3:24) and to Rosenberg's first ten paragraphs, associative links are established by word repetition requiring a paraphrastic rendering of the original. In the original, only the woman speaks of touching the tree, but there is a lot of touching in Rosenberg's translation: Yahweh cautions that if they touch the tree death will touch them; before eating, the man and woman are untouched by shame; and the snake assures them that if they eat, death will not touch them.

Another word full of resonance for Rosenberg is "smooth." The man and woman are naked, untouched by shame, but later the man hides from Yahweh because he knew he was smooth-skinned, while the snake is smoother-tongued than any wild creature that Yahweh made. Instead of Eve becoming the mother of all the living, we read that "she would have all who live, smooth the way, mother." Later, and somewhat perversely, where the Hebrew word "smooth" (*halaq*) actually occurs, when Jacob describes himself as a smooth man in contrast to the hirsute Esau, Rosenberg has him protest that his skin is bare. This is a pity, because the narrator surely intended to remind the reader that, in addition to being hairless, Jacob was also a slippery character at that point of the story.

As we would expect, Bloom's commentary on Rosenberg's text is full of striking and provocative insights, sometimes playful, sometimes perverse, but at any rate rarely boring. After restoring J's missing creation account, suppressed in favor of the Priestly version in Genesis 1, Bloom turns his attention to the Garden of Eden story, reading it not as a story of sin and punishment, not even as, in Paul Ricoeur's phrase, a myth of deviation, but as a lovingly and playfully ironic account of the unsatisfactory state of affairs in which we find ourselves and, more specifically, in which the author found herself in the twilight days of the post-Solomonic era. There is therefore for Bloom no original sin—a misinterpretation scandalously prominent in Christian theology—but only a statement of the reality principle: this is the way it is. There is also no stigma attaching to the woman; on the contrary, she is the author's favorite character and the only one of the *dramatis personae*, including Yahweh, who comes out of the story looking good.

All of this is very interesting, but one cannot help suspecting that the author has missed something of the symbolic force and gravity of the narrative as a whole. Comparison with Gilgamesh, which the author of Genesis 2-3 may have had in mind in writing, would perhaps have given a deeper resonance to the reality principle, including the limitations of human capacities and the acceptance of death. We can be thankful, nevertheless, for a fresh and highly original demonstration of the power of these texts to challenge and subvert.

Race and Urban Politics

THE CLOSEST OF STRANGERS: LIBERALISM AND THE POLITICS OF RACE IN NEW YORK. By JIM SLEEPER. *W. W. Norton. 345 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by **Lawrence M. Mead**

MOST AMERICANS have the sense that something went terribly wrong in the nation's big cities sometime

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in the middle of the 1960s. Since then, urban areas have been perceived essentially as centers of social problems, even social pathologies. Urban affairs have become a continuing tale of rising crime and welfarism, neighborhood decay, and financial crisis. Nowhere is that more true than in New York, the nation's greatest metropolis.

Most people have little precise sense of what went wrong. City politics is an arcane mystery that only insiders comprehend. Existing accounts of New York—for example, Ken Auletta's *The Streets Were Paved With Gold*, Charles R. Morris' *The Cost of Good Intentions*, and Martin Shefter's *Political Crisis/Fiscal Crisis*—concentrate on the city's financial difficulties. In *The Closest of Strangers*, Jim Sleeper, an editorial writer for *New York Newsday*, leads us toward a more political diagnosis that may get closer to the nub of the problem. He says, in essence, that claim-making rooted in race has destroyed the civic culture that once made cities like New York governable.

At the simplest level, the book is an engrossing chronicle of past and present racial politics in New York. Recent episodes include several highly-publicized violent crimes (with blacks as both perpetrators and victims), the Tawana Brawley affair (in which a black girl claimed fraudulently to have been raped by whites), and, at a more edifying level, David Dinkins' election as the city's first black mayor. Sleeper writes with unusual authority, as he is both a longtime city journalist and an expert on the past racial history of New York. He also writes well. Hardly a page of the book fails to strike off some memorable phrase. In addition to its shrewd analysis, *The Closest of Strangers* is a joy to read.

Sleeper's argument is subtler than it seems on the surface. At first glance, the book is primarily an attack on a huckstering type of black leader recently personified by the Rev. Al Sharpton and the lawyers C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox, Jr. They have, in defending Brawley and other dubious black causes, elbowed aside more dignified black leaders in the mold of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Their style is to blame every problem on white racism; in the process, they alienate whites who might otherwise be their allies. Their overreaching is mainly responsible, Sleeper believes, for the racial polarization that now dogs the city, and his prose expresses the outrage he feels over their excesses.

Sleeper would thus appear to fit Irving Kristol's definition of a conservative—a liberal mugged by reality. But he is no friend of the right. He blames the economic establishment for much of the city's travail. He argues that real estate developers promoted the destruction of ethnic neighborhoods and that the benefits of the economic boom of the 1980s went disproportionately to Wall Street. These economic interests, along with the vast public bureaucracy, constitute a "permanent government" that politicians—even liberal politicians like David Dinkins—must accommodate. Sleeper even contends that urban racial problems are but one face of a "system of economic injustice" that afflicts blacks and white alike.

Yet Sleeper is not a conventional leftist either. His real preference is for a sort of civic liberalism that has more to do with the manner of politics than its substance. In his view, the main engine of black progress has not been black pressure from outside the system, but rather the city's own "civic culture." Traditionally, New Yorkers had an "admiration" for "excellence," and they would let people of any race fulfill it. They were certainly not color blind, yet they showed a "rough but ready tolerance" for blacks along with the other groups of their multi-ethnic city. As a result, blacks knew real advancement in New York even before the civil rights era.

This tolerant culture depended vitally, however, on the observance of what Sleeper calls "race-transcendent standards of public truth and civil order." Beginning in the late sixties, racial militants flouted those norms. The problem was not what they demanded, but how. They suggested in effect that conventional expectations of honesty and personal responsibility did not apply to them, that the very attempt to invoke them was nothing but a cover for white racism. Meanwhile, liberal sympathizers among journalists and intellectuals took to explaining away black crime, welfarism, and school failure as the products of a hostile society. It was this rhetoric of irresponsibility, more than any specific black demand, that alienated whites from the black cause.

This damage was compounded by economic changes. It was in the 1970s, Sleeper claims, that the business community cut back its commitment to New York. Firms fled the city, triggering the fiscal crisis of 1975. Affluent whites withdrew from the public schools and the subway system in favor of private education and transportation. These private forms of consumption undermined the shared public institutions that had been New York's pride. The yuppie waves who came to New York in recent years continued that pattern. The races and classes thus experienced the boom of the 1980s separately, not together. It was, Sleeper concludes, the combination of black extremism and white secession that "broke the spine of New York's civic culture."

Sleeper's point is that there must be a *political* basis for black progress, not only a moral or legal one. Claimants for civic benefits who behave badly will be rebuffed, even if their cause is just. The trouble with recent black leadership is that it speaks only the "tribal truth" of black injury at the hands of whites, neglecting the injuries that whites today feel they suffer at the hands of blacks. Liberal lawyers go to court to force affirmative action, busing, or housing desegregation upon unwilling whites, dismissing all opposition as racist. But, Sleeper

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notes, white resistance today is mostly rooted in a well-founded fear of black disorder, not race *per se*.

Until the mid-1960s, black leaders showed more respect for consensus. That attitude of respect made them more, not less, effective than the more militant figures of today, and Sleeper concludes that black politics must return to that tradition. Leaders must demonstrate the same "internal discipline and social reciprocity" shown by the early civil rights leadership and the more recent feminist movement. These *personal* virtues were tokens for the claimants' loyalty to the larger society. It was largely because of them that just claims were honored. There still are black leaders in this style. Sleeper's heroes are David Dinkins and Congressman Major Owens, both of whom used "race-transcendent" appeals to reassemble the biracial coalition that once undergirded racial progress in New York and the nation.

The author is even more attracted to local self-help organizations that, in the Saul Alinsky style, create change through their own organization and effort, rather than grandstanding in the press. He has discovered several such groups doing good work amid the rubble of the ghetto, most notably the East Brooklyn churches that sponsored the "Nehemiah" program to build low-income housing. Whereas the radicals find it "more satisfying to hurt than to hope," the community organizers have set aside private wounds for a practical style that can unite blacks and whites for progressive change.

THE RADICALS ARE doomed to disappointment because their demands are essentially unlimited. There is no black problem for which they do not expect white society, in some way, to take responsibility. One can understand where the demand comes from. Blacks seek a solace as limitless as the demands whites made on blacks in the era of slavery and Jim Crow. But that is not something in the power of white society to grant, even assuming the best of intentions. In any case, that would perpetuate a heritage where whites, rather than blacks themselves, controlled black advancement. It would violate norms of fairness just as the earlier servitude did. A society that would exempt the downtrodden from normal civilities on grounds of disadvantage would not be one that they, or anybody else, would want to join.

Sleeper's account offers a probing analysis of urban politics today. But for a full explanation of our social dilemma, one needs to look further. Sleeper suggests that racial radicalism and exploitive business reactions were jointly responsible for urban decline, as if a more moderate political style and a more trustworthy elite could somehow have solved the social and economic problems of the city.

It is more likely the case that the social problems came first and the destructive political responses followed. Black neighborhoods were overwhelmed by welfare, crime, drugs, and school failure from the 1960s on. One reason was large-scale immigration of poor blacks from the South, another the departure of better-functioning, middle-class blacks to the suburbs in pursuit of newly opened opportunities. Finally, there was the atrophy of public authority, as schools, welfare programs, and law enforcement failed to uphold norms of learning, work, and obedience to the law in ghetto areas.

These problems, in turn, spawned the radicalism and economic abandonment Sleeper speaks of. The new black poverty overwhelmed public and private institutions in turn. On Sleeper's showing, housing and school administrators failed in their efforts to integrate poor blacks even before black radicalism became vocal in the 1960s, partly because that officialdom was dominated by liberal Jews, whose authority many blacks rejected. Business, for its part, was repelled by crime and the unreliability of a disadvantaged workforce even more than by the high costs of the city.

Although Sleeper is brutally frank, he is in a sense too optimistic. He writes as if the issues of probity raised by recent black leaders were mere distractions from the serious business of politics, which should still be the pursuit of practical social reform. If insurgent leaders would only behave better, he suggests, we could get back to the high-minded progressive political style that made the old New York work. But the city's political woes go well beyond personalities or behavioral styles; they are rooted in unprecedented social problems.

IN TRADITIONAL REFORM politics, the central question was how to advance the economic prospects of ordinary citizens. Liberals thought larger government could promote equality, while conservatives looked to the free market. But if the two sides disputed the organization of society, they both believed that the beneficiaries of reform were self-reliant. People were presumed to work hard and obey the law. It certainly is true that most minority Americans still meet that description. Sleeper movingly describes, for example, thousands of earnest blacks lining up to apply for temporary jobs at a local department store.

Racial politics, however, is today dominated by the "undeserving"—criminals, school dropouts, the homeless, and welfare recipients who do not work. These people are far fewer than the deserving, yet due to the breakdown of the public order, they dominate urban hopes and fears. It is much tougher today to attribute their problems to some impersonal source of absence of opportunity, such as racism or lack of jobs, than it was a generation ago. Today's urban controversy, therefore, cannot be about redistribution of resources among working families. It is inevitably about the issues of *personal* probity Sleeper regards as superficial—the upsets raised among citizens by the behavior of the dysfunctional poor and

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the radical street advocates who speak for them.

In this politics the central issue is not how to advance economic equality, but whether disadvantaged people can be held responsible for their behavior. The dispute extends even to matters such as crime or illegitimacy over which people would appear to exercise control. This issue in turn hinges on whether the downtrodden are competent to manage their lives, something never doubted in the old politics. Conservatives tend to hold the poor responsible for misbehavior because they believe in competence. Liberals are more permissive, in part because they doubt that the poor can cope. For the right, dependent adults are lazy exploiters who can and should shape up. For the left, they are innocent victims who deserve redress, but from whom little can be expected.

Liberals have paid a heavy political price for their views on these issues. The public decidedly takes conservative positions on responsibility and competence, and this is the main reason Republicans have controlled the White House and the national agenda for most of a generation. To recover control, liberals would have to be much tougher on crime and welfare. But that is a price most are unwilling to pay, whatever the political damage, so strong is their conviction that the poor are victims.

Sleeper also thinks that the recent emphasis on race in urban politics is excessive. Race, he believes, is a red herring that only disrupts the "transracial" coalition that poor blacks and whites might together form to wrest power from "irresponsible" elites. His is the message of the New Deal, the tradition of class politics. But in the new politics, it is race rather than class that is central. For if the key issues are responsibility and competence, race speaks to those questions as mere economic inequality does not. While few believe today that minorities suffer inherent inferiorities, a great many believe that race can explain why poor members of these groups fail to get ahead in an apparently open society. Liberals say that subtle forms of bias still hold such people back, while conservatives blame white guilt that holds nonwhites to lesser standards than others. The real differences here are about competence, not social structure. Claims to "disadvantage" today generate the passions that appeals to working-class unity did earlier.

The most depressing lesson from *The Closest of Strangers* is how little both left and right have expected from blacks in New York. Each in its own way took the appearance of nonwhite poverty as a signal to give up on the city. The radicals said, in effect, that their followers could not be expected to behave well in a racist society, a message of permissiveness that leaders of the old labor and civil rights movements would never have tolerated. Business, while it did not overtly abandon social standards, did lose faith that a nonwhite workforce could benefit from education and handle jobs as ably as white ethnic workers had in earlier generations. This race-rooted pessimism about competence has replaced the specter of class conflict as the pall that overshadows American politics.

Sleeper believes firmly in mainstream mores, yet his argument for them is curiously cautious and it appeals mainly to prudence. A more "responsible" style, he tells blacks, is the price they must pay for an effective political alliance with whites. But can such reasoning compete with the raw conviction of injustice that propels racial radicalism? Civility must be defended in more absolute terms, as something good and right in itself. Today, admittedly, that is difficult to do. It is far from enough to show, as Sleeper does, that conventional moral norms are popular and salutary for blacks. He would have to exorcise the great modern demon of relativism, the tendency of contemporary thought to treat moral laws not as true but as value judgments that are essentially arbitrary.

One might, to accomplish that, appeal to religion. Both the Old and New Testaments justify Sleeper's "race-transcendent standards" on principled, not prudential, grounds. As a Jew, the author may be loath to invoke his own tradition to blacks who, if they profess any faith, are largely Christian or Muslim. It is more surprising that black politicians show the same hesitation. Many of them, after all, have been clergymen (even the notorious Sharpton is a man of the cloth).

Yet black clergy seldom hold black public officials to biblical standards of conduct. They may privately deplore ghetto disorders and the hucksters who feed on them, but they seldom judge in public. They may inveigh against social ills, but they lay most of the blame for them at the feet of white society, not their own community. Some of this reflects, no doubt, another kind of prudence—fear of attack from the radicals. It also reflects, however, the same doubt about the poor's own fortitude that infects all of liberal thinking.

It is racial claims rather than religious norms that constitute the supreme source of moral authority in today's urban politics. Among those who press for change, black or white, the myth of racial martyrdom generates more solace and hope for change than any traditional faith. One is "saved" from sin by racial innocence more surely than by grace, and the demand for reparations is weightier than the call to follow Jesus or the Ten Commandments. Liberal churchmen have bought into this rhetoric of disadvantage, rather than defending the "transracial" message of their creeds. Their message is no longer to forgive the poor, but to exempt them from normal expectations. They forget that the Bible, though solicitous of the needy, is hardly indulgent toward dysfunctional (i.e., sinful) behavior. Typically, Jesus heals the stricken, but he also commands them to get up and walk.

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It is a tribute to Jim Sleeper that, though he writes as a journalist, he raises these deeper issues. The political problem of New York is rooted in our beliefs about race, competence, and the sources of salvation. These set the background for the failures of leadership Sleeper writes of. Where shall we find the confidence and the authority to demand of poor blacks and their leaders what we expect of other people? Of all the questions facing American urban politics, this is among the greatest—and for its solution we shall have to look finally not to politics, the master science, but to theology, the queen of the sciences.

Populist Protestantism

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY. By NATHAN HATCH. *Yale University Press. 312 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Michael Cromartie**

IN 1802 a flamboyant Baptist preacher named John Leland presented a twelve-hundred pound "mammoth cheese" to Thomas Jefferson at a White House ceremony. Molded in a cider press from the milk of nine hundred cows, this phenomenal creation bore the motto "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." This bizarre and media-minded event has a strikingly modern ring, but it also tells us something significant about the time in which it occurred.

John Leland is just one of the many colorful preachers who, following the American Revolution, led a religious revolt against the learned theologians and ecclesiastical institutions of his day. He and other remarkably popular visionary leaders caused the period of the early republic to become, according to historian Nathan Hatch, "the most centrifugal epoch in American church history." The lives of these men and the movements that they led are recounted in this fascinating book. (Whatever became of the huge mound of cheese, Hatch does not say.)

Hatch, who teaches at the University of Notre Dame, argues that the American Revolution dramatically expanded the number of people who decided that they were capable of thinking for themselves on all manner of issues. "Respect for authority, tradition, station, and education eroded," writes Hatch, and as a result, "American Protestantism has been skewed away from central ecclesiastical institutions and high culture; it has been pushed and pulled into its present shape by a democratic or populist orientation." This democratic impulse provided the means for evangelical Protestantism to flourish.

Hatch examines five popular churches and religious movements that emerged early in the nineteenth century: the Methodists, the Baptists, the Mormons, various black churches, and the "Christian" movement (sometimes called the Campbellite movement, after Alexander Campbell). Hatch finds their leaders—previously unfamiliar men like Leland, Francis Asbury, and Lorenzo Dow—every bit as important in the history of nineteenth-century Protestantism as the better known ministers Lyman Beecher, Horace Bushnell, and Timothy Dwight.

AS A RESULT OF an anti-authoritarian impulse, writes Hatch, Americans of the early Republic began to exalt "religious leaders short in social graces, family connections, and literary education." They preached their message to the "unschooled and unsophisticated," and offered people of humble origins "a marvelous sense of individual potential and collective aspiration." For these reasons religious populism became an institution in itself and remains today one of the strongest and deepest impulses in American life.

The transitional period between 1780 and 1830 left an "indelible imprint upon the structures of American Christianity." Christianity during this time was fundamentally reshaped and molded by common people who "wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their music lively and singable, and their churches in local hands." These were people who refused to defer to learned theologians and instead "associated virtue with ordinary people rather than elites." Hatch shows how these ordinary folks, armed with the gifts of persuasion and a "common touch," came to "distrust leaders of genius and talent" and instead learned to "shape their own faith and submit to leaders of their own choosing."

Mass religious movements emerged that were not only deeply fervent but also genuinely democratic and populist. There also appeared a new style of minister and leader, a fact not lost on Alexis de Tocqueville, who said in amazement: "Where I expect to find a priest, I find a politician." This new-style leader often urged others to be contemptuous of education and creeds, and encouraged his followers to think and examine the Scriptures for themselves.

Such spiritual populism brought anything but religious cohesiveness to the new nation. It brought instead a "sea of sectarian rivalries" that led to "religious ferment, chaos, and originality unmatched in American history."

> Few traditional claims to religious authority could weather such a relentless beating. There were competing claims of old denominations and a host of new ones. Wandering prophets appeared dramatically, and supremely heterodox religious movements gained a following.

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People veered from one church to another. Religious competitors wrangled unceasingly, traditional clergy and self-appointed preachers foremost in the fray.

Moreover, mass communication networks grew as an explosion of popular religious material became the primary means of promotion for competing religious groups. Church leaders became "communication entrepreneurs" and master preachers of what John Wesley called "plain truth for plain people." This required an ability to distill their message to reach the ears of uneducated common folks. Evangelicals learned to craft their warm appeals for the unchurched masses. They effectively "made evangelicalism a major force on both sides of the Atlantic," says Hatch. "Folk geniuses" is the term Hatch uses to describe these apparently great communicators.

But there was a downside to this religious fervor among the masses. The response of congregations to this anti-authoritarian, anti-centralist, and anti-elitist message began to dictate the contours of the message being proclaimed. A radical dependence on and sensitivity to the audience caused the values of the listeners to shape the content of the message. Charles Finney told ministers to speak "the language of common life." He urged preachers to "throw out their notes, look their audience square in the face, and preach in a style that was colloquial, repetitious, conversational, and lively."

This "audience-centered" approach was the beginning of a revolution in American religious life, the effects of which can still be seen today across the entire theological landscape. From codependency theories couched in theological language to pleas that the church be "market-driven" (defined by one leader recently as, "focusing on what people are looking for from a ministry") to reformulations of a gospel of self-esteem, the messages of many current popular religious leaders are dictated more by their attempt to be "receptor oriented" than by their critique of the *Zeitgeist*.

Modern evangelical Protestantism has, because of its populist tendencies, shown paradoxical signs of strength and weakness. Measuring the success of their ministries by their popular reception, evangelical pastors in America have nourished millions of believers in basic doctrinal content. They have built over 250 Bible colleges and seminaries in this century alone. But while popular leaders sell books in the millions, the secularism of elites meets little effective challenge. When on the march politically, evangelicals are only able to stir up the troops within their own camp. As Hatch has noted elsewhere, because many evangelicals "have abandoned the university, the arts, and other realms of 'high culture' " they are often "least capable of winning the right to be heard by twentieth-century intellectuals." By continuing to slight "the life of the mind," warns Hatch, evangelicals, for all their success at reaching people at large, "must sooner or later face the specter of Pyrrhic victory."

Hatch makes a convincing case that much of the distinctive nature of American Protestant Christianity can be attributed to its populist and democratic orientation. The many self-appointed and independent religious leaders surrounding us today (from Pat Robertson to Jesse Jackson) were foreshadowed in many ways by a populist theology that developed out of the first half of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, much of American Christianity "continues to be powered by ordinary people and by the contagious spirit of their efforts to storm heaven by the back door."

Winner of the Albert C. Outler Prize in Ecumenical Church History and of two other prestigious academic awards, Nathan Hatch's book has already become a standard reference on American religious history.

Back to Fundamentals

The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View from Within; A Response from Without. Edited by Norman J. Cohen. *Eerdmans. 266 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Reviewed by **Joseph A. Varacalli**

This volume, containing sixteen essays (including the useful introduction by editor Norman Cohen), constitutes a valuable reference source on American Protestant and other forms of religious "fundamentalism."

There is a little something here for everyone. The essays, for one thing, range from basically sympathetic accounts of this variation of the conservative religious impulse to vicious diatribes against it. Others intend to be even-handed and objective historical accounts, with some closely approximating this ideal.

The stated purposes of the essays also vary widely. Some are concerned with the basic issue of definition: Should the term "fundamentalism" be restricted to its American Protestant context? Should it be defined in terms of the attempt to protect the basic, foundational revelatory insights of any religion to be found on the globe? Should the term be allowed always and without exception to signify religious "fanaticism"? If so, what of the indisputable authoritarian tendencies of the religious left? Other essays are concerned with the issue of the theological adequacy of religious fundamentalism, noting that it is not necessarily coextensive with religious orthodoxy. And, finally, many essays are concerned with the ramifications of fundamentalism for the American political scene, for social relations and ecumenical endeavors, and for (alleged) psychological well-being.

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Indeed, a good deal of the material necessary for a comprehensive "sociology of knowledge and of truth" analysis of the fundamentalist phenomenon can be found in this collection.

In his historical essay, Jaroslav Pelikan notes that orthodoxy, in not always requiring the literal exegesis of religious texts, is broader in its parameters than is fundamentalism. Orthodoxy is "not a straight line, but a circle drawn around a variety of permissible views, excluding other views." In another historical essay, George M. Marsden carefully unpacks his definition that "a fundamentalist is an evangelical Protestant who is militantly opposed to modern liberal theologies and to some aspects of secularism in modern culture." Marsden's qualification on secularism stems from the historic identification of Protestantism with an eighteenth and nineteenth century American outlook that still survives, in some modified form, into the present. Clark Pinnock, in a more obviously sympathetic portrait, argues that Protestant fundamentalism, especially what he terms "open" fundamentalism, is making major positive contributions to Protestant America. As he states, "It sends a clear and important message to mainline Protestantism: 1) to identify more with the historic faith and to stop dabbling with wild theological revisions and 2) to start talking better sense in the areas of politics and society and to stop advocating radical positions and get back to fundamental values."

IN AN AMBITIOUS and important essay, James D. Hunter addresses some of the worldwide manifestations of fundamentalism found in Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism. One can challenge his claim that all religious traditions in the modern world face only three options: *withdrawal, accommodation,* and *resistance.* Hunter ignores the option of *development* articulated in the Roman Catholic tradition by John Henry Newman as discussed by Pelikan and in later essays on Judaism as discussed by Leon Wieseltier and on Islam by Riffat Hassan.

As a result of his omitting this fourth strategy, Hunter is forced to conclude that fundamentalist religion is always an example of the resistance to modernity and that "what ultimately triggers the fundamentalist reaction is a sense of crisis in the credibility of the faith for the fundamentalists themselves." Hunter's assertion may be true for some defenders of religious "fundamentals" in the modern world; however, it misses a considerable neo-orthodox or "developmental" segment within the biblical orbit that continually strives to reach, in a cautiously confident manner, a *via media* between the demands of heaven and earth.

In his overview of "pietist politics," A. James Reichley argues that "socially conservative Protestants—whether they be labeled 'fundamentalists,' 'evangelicals,' or the 'religious new right'—have already significantly shifted the balance of American politics." What of the secular fear that a growing religious new right might run roughshod over the rights of minorities? For Reichley, "Our constitutional and political systems are to a great extent self-corrective against incursions by extremist groups."

Mortimer Ostow's psychological analysis argues, in essence, that Protestant fundamentalism provides what its adherents consider a safe haven in an otherwise wicked world. Given that "the members of the fundamentalist community cannot tolerate uncertainty . . . they restrict themselves to a single translation [of Scripture] and insist that it is absolutely correct and unambiguous. The Bible makes the world predictable." Not only does Ostow *not* allow for the empirical reality of a somewhat "open" fundamentalism, he unfortunately does not follow up on his own important caveat to the effect that "these [fundamentalist] qualities clearly characterize some similar groups that do not claim religious orientation." It is interesting to note that, as an aside in his own contribution, Richard John Neuhaus seems to be responding to Ostow's one-sided analysis: "That many fundamentalists are fanatical cannot be denied. We would be well-advised, however, to consider whether there is not an element of the fanatical in much of the reaction to fundamentalism." Amen.

THE MAJOR POINT of Neuhaus' essay, however, is to plead the case to respect the rights of fundamentalists to participate in the public square and to listen attentively to their substantive claims and complaints regarding a secular monopoly in some of American's key "megastructural" institutions (e.g., education and the mass media). James M. Dunn offers a sharp and unsympathetic rejoinder to Neuhaus: "One is distressed not by specificity of religious witness, but rather by the dogmatic insistence upon being the sole possessor of truth, followed by demonstrable dishonesty. That is what troubles many about the political activity of fundamentalists. One engaged in the day-to-day struggle is acutely aware of the end-justifies-the-means tactics of the radical right." Be that as it may or may not, one wonders if Mr. Dunn would offer the same verdict on the tactics of the left in, say, the hearings on the nomination of Robert Bork.

Riffat Hassan, in her contribution, presents "serious objections to the use of terms such as 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalists' with reference to Islam or Muslims." In what could be construed as a critical response to the previously noted tripartite typology of Hunter, Hassan notes that "a review of Muslim thought in the modern period shows that instead of being in opposition to each other, the terms 'fundamentalist,' 'modernist,' and 'liberal' are oftentimes applied to the same thinker." Similarly, Leon Wieseltier argues that there is no such thing as Jewish fundamentalism, given that there is "a love of

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development, a commitment of religious concepts and practices that allows the Jew to live fully in the present, even if the present is lived in exile."

In an intellectually dubious and simply nasty analysis, the Jesuit Patrick Arnold describes "Catholic fundamentalism as a psychological disease afflicting the conservative wing of our religious community." The inclusion of this essay on the part of the editor can be considered appropriate only if the point is to demonstrate the injustice to which conservative religionists are often subjected by the liberal religious establishment in the U.S.

That some liberals can live up to their name in terms of empathetic understanding, openness, and essential fairness is evidenced by the contribution of Donald W. Shriver, Jr. in which he urges his fellow liberals to be more open to dialogue and compromise with fundamentalists. After correctly noting that both liberals and conservatives have their own "fundamental convictions," he argues that "one of the differences between having fundamentals and being a fundamentalist hinges on whether, even in possession of one's clearest convictions, there is something outside those convictions which prevents them from turning into the intolerance of an 'ism.' That other something for many of us is God, before whom our convictions, like our knowledge and our virtue, are modest, finite, and often afflicted with sin."

While there is much to commend in David Saperstein's analysis of the fundamentalist involvement in the American political scene, his work is marred, like that of some of the other contributors, in failing to acknowledge the totalistic tendencies of those of progressivist stripe. For him, the point "is not that the religious right does not have the right to speak and petition the government; it is that from the perspective of the religious traditions of the mainstream religious, what they are saying is not right. They have forgotten the fundamentals of the Judeo-Christian religious ethic." The status of Saperstein's assertion hinges on what is meant by "the fundamentals of the Judeo-Christian religious ethic"; one wonders if the values and attitudes of most Protestant fundamentalists are perhaps at least as close to this ethic as are those of the People for the American Way, one of the numerous left-wing groups that the author, according to the book's credits, is intimately involved with.

Arguing that the conflict between fundamentalist and liberal religion "is a question about proper balance, about the relative weight we attach to God's sovereignty and to human will," Eugene B. Borowitz makes a sophisticated (if not necessarily persuasive) case for "the enduring truth of religious liberalism." And in the final essay, Preston N. Williams addresses his fellow religious liberals as to how "to set aside or bracket the question of inerrancy in the same way we set aside the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope." He argues, combining elements of good will and paternalism, as follows: "We can understand how the teaching [of inerrancy] came to those who accept it, without accepting it ourselves or feeling the need to condemn those who believe it. More importantly, we might point out to all that whatever their attitude toward the doctrine, it is unable, even when utilized by the ones committed to it, to achieve the religious purposes intended."

This Roman Catholic reviewer's sympathies on fundamentalism and its critics? They are not with the reductionist tendencies of liberal religiosity. They are not with either a world-withdrawing or world-rejecting fundamentalism. They are not with any alleged presuppositionless or boundless or "post-liberal" theology. Rather, they lie with those neo-orthodox, developmental, or open "fundamentalists" who simply and honestly dare to both defend and critically apply to an ever-changing world the truths they consider to be handed down to them from God. It's really that basic. Or should I say "fundamental"?

BRIEFLY NOTED

Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States. By Richard E. Wentz. *Fortress Press. 370 pp. $19.95 paper.*

Wentz, who teaches religion at Arizona State, set out to give the general reader an accessible overview of the diversities of religion in America. He has succeeded admirably. Clear, straightforward, balanced, and sympathetic—those are some of the adjectives that readily come to mind. Puritans, Fundamentalists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Mormons, Jews, and adherents of Asian religions will all find themselves fairly represented here. For the reader who wants a reliable introduction to the worlds of religion in America, *Religion in the New World* is the book to suggest. Certainly a copy belongs in every parish or synagogue library.

Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering. By Stanley Hauerwas. *Eerdmans. 154 pp. $9.95 paper.*

Hauerwas, a frequent contributor to this journal, takes on the perennial questions of human suffering, but from a decidedly different perspective. In these three extended essays, he plumbs both personal experience and literary accounts of human suffering—especially the illness and death of children. Hauerwas challenges conventional "theodicies"—attempts to justify the ways of God to man—because they begin, he argues, with a universalistic notion of an omnipotent deity that is alien to biblical faith. Building on the work of the late Paul Ramsey (especially his *Patient as Person*), Hauerwas contends that medical technique must be subordinated and integrated into human

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stories. If we fail to do that, he contends, medicine itself becomes a kind of *ersatz* theodicy. Hauerwas is here in sympathetically critical conversation with Daniel Callahan and others who urge a sharp distinction between medical care and medical cure. Like Callahan, the author believes we should come to accept the concept of a "natural life span." Unlike Callahan, who Hauerwas thinks perpetuates central myths of liberal individualism, he argues that one's natural life story is not defined by control and satisfaction but by continuing discovery in obedience to transcendent purpose. With *Naming the Silences*, Stanley Hauerwas adds to a prodigious corpus of work that reinforces his standing as one of the most challenging moral theologians of our time.

Complex Phenomena

The rules of chaos are simple: A mountain
is never a perfect cone. A lake
is never really a circle. A drop

of dew is not a microcosm.
No. Flowers wither.
Dust collects. There is the

relentless return of what we
do not want. Everything inclines
to disorder. But then how to

explain this grove of orange trees
planted so close branch nuzzles branch,
the whole world in permanent rows?

An illusion, of course. When
the present for most of us lasts only
3 seconds. But then how to

explain the man blind from birth who
sees a person and believes he sees
a tree on legs. How did he find

the conceit to link such disparates?
The tactile vision of his past creates the
chaos of his present sightedness.

His world, newly angled, is no longer
reasonable, but still he relies on what
he knows. He names what he sees, revising

phylum, genus, class as he goes,
sometimes standing quite still, eyes closed
in order to recall the harmony of things.

Jill P. Baumgaertner

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Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

All You Needed to Know You Didn't Learn in Sunday School

The Search Institute is located in Minneapolis, and it succeeded in inducing the Lilly Endowment and six denominations to give it big bucks to study the "faith maturity" of members of Protestant congregations. (If you are one of those busybodies who wants to know where your money goes, the denominations are: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian Church (USA), Southern Baptist Convention, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church.)

The findings of the study have received considerable attention, not least because members of churches thought to be more "conservative" rated very low in "faith maturity." An examination of the survey indicates why that should come as no surprise. The eight criteria of a "mature faith" include these: "Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others," and "Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice." Faith is rated by the "vertical dimension" (spiritual concerns) and the "horizontal dimension" (social concerns). The criteria for measuring the "vertical dimension," however, include no reference to belief or doctrine but are heavy on feeling (e.g., "I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation"). There is much that is conspicuously absent from this survey's definition of Christian faith. Maybe we missed it, but it seems that there is, for example, no mention of Christ.

The "study" is almost charmingly naive in its certitude about what constitutes mature faith. Everything depends upon attitudes that are Good and attitudes that are Bad. Here are some of the Good Attitudes: I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor; I do things to help protect the environment; I take excellent care of my physical health; I am active in efforts to promote world peace; My life is filled with meaning and purpose. Then there are the Bad Attitudes of the immature in faith: I have a hard time accepting myself; I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have; My life is filled with stress and anxiety; I tend to be critical of other people; I do not want churches getting involved in political issues; I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world. (Shucks, we feelright Christians figured that last one out a long time ago. You're still bothered by *that*?)

The document is called "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations." Some might take it as evidence of the rot and banality of popular religious belief, but that is unfair. Its conceptual confusions notwithstanding, the study does document how some Protestant Christians respond to left-of-center moralisms. Those who are most smugly pleased with themselves for holding politically correct opinions are certified as mature in faith. They need no forgiveness. ("God, I thank thee that I am not like other men," as the Pharisee prayed to himself in the temple.) Then there are the immature who think there is something radically wrong with themselves and the world. They are still hung up on sin, cross, redemption, and similarly childish obsessions.

Lutherans, it turned out, have an unusual number of Bad Attitudes. One Lutheran leader declared the study of the Search Institute "invaluable" because it shows that the church "has not been doing an effective job in Christian education." What "Effective Christian Education" shows most effectively, however, is the fraudulence of what is presented as the "scientific" study of religion—and the credulity of church leaders who cannot distinguish between Christian faith and liberal sentimentalities. One is inescapably put in mind of H. Richard Niebuhr's paraphrase of the gospel according to liberal

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Protestantism: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross." Except here, as noted earlier, there is no need for a Christ.

FT

THE COURAGE TO SAY NO

Evangelical Protestants sometimes remind themselves that they were not quick to catch on to the monumental questions posed by the abortion debate. Not until the later seventies, with the emergence of what was called "the religious new right," did abortion become an urgent item on the evangelical agenda, along with issues such as school prayer and pornography. On the eve of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Southern Baptist Convention, for example, was formally calling for more permissive abortion legislation.

There were several factors contributing to evangelical tardiness on abortion, not least being a desire to avoid conflict. Christian communities of all stripes have a hard time resisting the idea that, if some wonderfully sincere and orthodox Christians are in favor of something, doing that something must be at least an "open question." Fortunately for the prolife cause, evangelical leaders did, after a while, come to recognize that the only response to an evil practice is a firm no. Most evangelicals have learned to say the no that is premised upon our yes to God-given responsibility for the weakest among us. In terms of both constituency and leadership, evangelicals are in the forefront of the movement for more protective attitudes and laws regarding abortion.

As almost everybody recognizes, abortion is about more than abortion. It is, among other things, about practices that are parasitical on the abortion industry and that, at least indirectly, support that industry. It is about, for instance, the use of fetuses and embryos for medical experiments. The prolife leadership in the country has generally recognized these connections. But it seems that, once again, some evangelicals are slow to catch on. The cover story of a recent issue of *Christianity Today*, the "mainline" voice of evangelicaldom, is titled "Brave New Harvest." (The crop being human embryos and fetuses.) There are perfunctory references to the moral ambiguities involved, but the gist of the article is that such harvesting for laboratory experiments can be clearly separated from the rightness or wrongness of abortion, can advance medical developments useful to the already born, and therefore should be approved.

Critical to the reasoning in *Christianity Today* is the fact that good Christians are engaged in such experiments, and *they* do not think that they are doing anything that is morally questionable. Attitudes toward abortion, the article acknowledges, will continue to influence the debate over the uses to which dead fetuses might be put, but the suggestion is that this is unfortunate. The article concludes: "For those Christians opposed to elective abortion, however, the issue becomes complicated because of the laudatory goals of those trying to help persons suffering from diabetes, Parkinson's, and other diseases. The church cannot just say no to these people in regard to this procedure. It must also say yes to them in tangible ways." In sum, Christians should go along. But why can't the church say no? Because it is not morally permitted to say no, or because the church does not have the nerve?

Following the article in question, the editors run a piece of outright advocacy, "Why the Government Should Lift the Moratorium." The author is a doctor at a Dallas medical center and his argument is, to put it gently, recklessly misleading. The suggestion is that the government ban on using fetuses for medical experiments was adopted in a willy-nilly fashion some twenty years ago and has not been carefully thought through. It is further suggested that the great beneficiaries of such research are sick infants, and that a large portion of the "human tissue" in question is from fetuses aborted spontaneously (e.g., in miscarriages). These and similar claims range from being doubtful to simply untrue.

The editors join in with a third piece, promisingly titled "The Eugenic Temptation." After much ponderous language about "moral ambiguities" and the like, all they can bring themselves to say is that embryo and fetal experimentation "must always proceed with caution." God forbid that Christians should say no.

There are indeed some knotty problems in the enterprise under discussion, and not all the answers are clearcut. That is to say the obvious. Since people are going to have abortions anyway, why should we let all those dead fetuses "go to waste" when they might be put to good use for the living? And do we really believe that those "surplus" embryos resulting from new reproductive techniques have any claim to our respect, never mind our protection? Contrary to the impression given by *Christianity Today*, such questions have for a long time engaged the attention of some of our best thinkers. Some evangelicals seem to think a problem has not been thought about until they think about it. Having "discovered" the problem, they then proceed to invent the wheel.

Is it possible that the editors are not aware of the very detailed statements—theological, moral, and technical—issued by the Vatican on these questions? Or are Roman Catholic studies beyond the pale of "Christian" reflection? One wonders if the editors know about the panels of the National Institutes of Health that have taken up these questions. In that

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connection, they might read in particular the dissenting opinion written by James Burtchaell, author of *Rachel Weeping* and one of the most incisive minds today exploring the ramifications of the abortion debate (see *This World* , Summer 1989). At the risk of seeming immodest (although we are only the editor), we also recommend to their attention a recent volume that brings together some of the most careful examinations of these issues, *Guaranteeing the Good Life: Medicine and the Return of Eugenics* (Eerdmans).

People of integrity can disagree on precisely what policies are best, or are attainable, with respect to clearly moral questions in medicine and genetics. Regrettably, a voice as influential as *Christianity Today* is addressing some of these questions in a simplistic and tendentious manner that reflects an ignorance of, or indifference toward, the larger discussion. More regrettably, the idea is advanced that good intentions or possible good consequences can justify complicity in the doing of evil. Most regrettably, it is suggested that, if good Christians are doing bad things, the church cannot say no.

The abortion debate, as weary as we may be of it, is just the beginning of intensifying contestations over technical control and manipulation of the *humanum*. The classic text in this connection is *The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis. A splendid contemporary midrash on that text is a book by Leon Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science* (Free Press). Evangelicals and others have a lot of homework to do if they are not to find themselves abetting, however inadvertently, great wrongs—as most evangelicals did abet the great wrong of abortion twenty years ago.

FT

A Compliment, Of Sorts

Rob Hershman produces television documentaries, among them "Judgment," which aired on HBO some months back. It is about a priest in Louisiana who sexually abused little boys. The show got rave reviews in the industry. After it aired, says Hershman, he started getting calls from Hollywood producers who want to turn it into a full-scale movie. *TV Guide* asks Hershman: "But why the morbid fascination and preoccupation with the Catholic Church? Would the story have been so prime if a Jewish rabbi or Protestant minister had been involved?" Mr. Hershman answers: "Well, I guess if the rabbi had been molesting boys in the Hasidic community. But one of the reasons why the Catholic Church is such an interesting subject is that it has an institutional memory of 2,000 years. The hierarchical lines of authority are very clear. When the parents' lawyer sued the church, he sued the Pope. The church is always fascinating because it is this extraordinary institutional center of people's spiritual lives."

It's as good a reason as any for being anti-Catholic, we suppose. Actually, we have long supported the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, and its protests against anti-Catholicism are entirely legitimate. But you can't get much dramatic mileage out of Protestantism, at least not mainline/oldline Protestantism. The chief achievement of Protestantism, said Mencken, is that it made God boring. That's unfair, of course, as Mencken was almost always unfair, but there is enough truth to give it a bit of bite. It should also be noted that *fundamentalist* Protestantism comes in for ample sensationalist treatment by the media. The rule would seem to be that those religious groups that "stick out" are going to get more than their fair share of critical attention. That should not be surprising. While being firmly opposed to anti-Catholicism, anti-Hasidism, and anti-Fundamentalism, we also recall the words of the One who said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." Mr. Hershman was paying an unintended compliment. Or maybe he even intended it as such.

FT

In Response: Weighing the Risks

Elsewhere in this issue, Phillip H. Harris, Solicitor of the United States Catholic Conference, raises important questions about the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) currently before Congress. He is certainly right in noting that the bill has gathered a curious coalition of backers. Judging by the well-known record of some members of the coalition, it does seem likely that different, and perhaps even contradictory, motives are engaged. But then, curious coalitions are the very stuff of democratic governance.

Mr. Harris may be right in saying that the RFRA, if passed, would promptly be found unconstitutional. In that event, it does not seem that much would be lost. Without RFRA, we would be in the position that Mr. Harris wants us to be in. What would have been gained, however, is that the Congress would have conveyed a clear message to the Court that *Smith*'s denial of religious exemption is not politically acceptable. Even judicial "originalists" do not claim that the Court can be or should be entirely indifferent to such legislative expressions. Harris sees a contradiction in invoking the will of the majority to limit the powers of the majority to violate

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minority religious rights. But surely the very idea of our constitutional order is that the majority acts to limit the powers of the majority. Is that not how the Constitution came into being in the first place?

Mr. Harris, invoking the distinguished Judge John Noonan, is right to note the "dismal record" of courts overriding religious freedom in the name of a flatulent notion of "compelling state interest." RFRA tries to put some spine into the phrase and give it more substance by using words such as "essential," "demonstrate," and "least restrictive means." Mr. Harris says that Congress could define anything as a "compelling state interest." He is right of course, even though that would fly in the face of the very purpose for which Congress passed RFRA. Politicians are not renowned for their consistency. But then, neither are courts. In fact, Mr. Harris' favored alternative to RFRA is to depend upon the Supreme Court's changing its mind, even "forgetting [*Smith*] as though it had never occurred." Maybe it comes down to whose fickleness you are willing to bet on, that of the Congress or that of the Court.

If the Congress violates the intent of RFRA by playing fast and loose with "compelling state interest," there is a political remedy. If, on the other hand, the new Court majority really does favor Scalia's reading of "free exercise," religious exemption is out the window for the foreseeable future. There is a judgment call involved here. It is possible that Congress will in the future undermine the religious freedom that RFRA is intended to protect. Many of us think it *highly probable* that the Court majority, following *Smith*, will continue to undermine that freedom.

Mr. Harris says that the limits of religious freedom will be "forever enshrined" in RFRA. In legislative politics and, for that matter, in Court doctrine, nothing is forever—an observation that is, as I understand it, at the heart of Mr. Harris' argument. He does not say so, but Mr. Harris seems to believe that the Court, left to itself, might come up with a *stronger* protection of religious freedom. Instead of "compelling state interest," some students of the subject prefer that the state be required to meet something like a test of "supreme and overriding governmental interest." But it seems extremely unlikely that either Court or Congress would accept such language. Mr. Harris is right: there are risks in RFRA. There are, on balance, greater risks in leaving religious freedom to the Court that gave us *Smith*.

FT

"BARBAROUS"

Among those opposed to abortion, opinion is sharply divided over Operation Rescue and similar efforts aimed at preventing abortions through civil disobedience. All people possessed of an elementary sense of decency, however, should be able to agree on the outrageousness of the way protestors are being treated by police and courts around the country. The courageous Nat Hentoff of the *Village Voice* writes, "The punishment Operation Rescue people have received has been barbarous." Prolife advocates in southern California note that actor Martin Sheen, after his eighteenth conviction for antinuclear protest, got three hours of community service. Some first-time abortion activists get 300 hours, others receive jail terms of more than thirty days, while some have been bankrupted through the use of RICO laws that were originally designed to combat organized crime.

Hentoff, who opposes both legal abortion and illegal prolife actions, is particularly concerned about pain-compliance techniques routinely used on protestors who go "limp" instead of walking to the paddy wagons. The head of a Los Angeles police unit said in a court deposition that it was permitted to inflict pain because the prolife protestors "are religious and consider it necessary to absorb pain." Sam Casey, an attorney with the California-based Western Center for Law and Religious Freedom, says, "There have been more Christians put in jail on behalf of the unborn than for any other civil rights movement in this country's history."

Whatever the figures, police brutality and draconian court judgments are reliably reported from Hartford to Atlanta to Los Angeles. Whatever one's view of the protestors, it is important to keep a close eye on these developments and, where appropriate, contact mayors, governors, and congressmen about abuses of the criminal justice system. Holding a prayer meeting in front of an "abortuary" may not be your style, but those who do so are entitled to at least as much respect as people who protest in more fashionable causes. The law, after all, is supposed to be even handed. (Readers interested in more information may write Friends of Operation Rescue, P.O. Box 370, Bronx, NY 10470.)

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CHALLENGING JEWISH ATTITUDES

Why, in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, are Christians

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obliged to learn about Judaism while Jews remain largely ignorant of Christianity? That is the question candidly addressed by Father John T. Pawlikowski, a prominent dialogue participant, in the Jewish-sponsored magazine *Moment*. "Jews, including Jewish educators, show little interest in deepening their knowledge of fundamental Christian beliefs," Pawlikowski writes. "Even Jewish centers of higher education . . . offer their students little exposure to Christianity apart from the history of Christian anti-Semitism."

Of course there are explanations. A history of persecution casts Christians and Christianity as the enemy, and who wants to sympathetically understand their enemy? Then too, the very idea of theology, many Jews contend, is a Christian concept and alien to Judaism, which is grounded in commandments (*mitzvot*) and peoplehood. Finally, there is a powerful fear of Christian proselytizing. Jews who get too interested in Christianity, it is feared, may end up by becoming Christians. Pawlikowski understands these inhibitions. "But I am also firmly convinced of the Israeli ecumenist philosopher David Hartman's contention that spiritual monism (non-pluralism) is a terminal disease that will destroy Judaism or any other faith—including mine—that adopts it. Therefore I reject all these reasons for Jewish reluctance to understand and appreciate Christianity's faith traditions."

Pawlikowski acknowledges that Christianity is, in many ways, more inherently dependent upon Judaism than is Judaism upon Christianity. "Still," he writes, "Jews should not glibly maintain, as many do, that Christianity makes no difference for their own faith perspective." With the great Jewish thinker of the early part of this century, Franz Rosenzweig, he believes that Jews need to understand anew that "the Jewish vocation, rooted in the biblical tradition, is to be an instrument for the redemption of all humankind." In his sophisticated formulation, Rosenzweig construed that Jewish vocation in terms of Christianity being "Judaism for the Gentiles." According to Pawlikowski, "From a Christian viewpoint, this approach is far superior to Jewish indifference to Christianity or outright hostility to the church's tradition."

For Jews to take up Pawlikowski's challenge will not be easy. He believes that it requires that Christians "must first clearly affirm the continued validity of the Jewish covenant apart from what Christians may believe about the coming of Christ." "Practically speaking, this means the termination of all organized efforts at proselytizing." Note that Pawlikowski does not say, as some Christians have charged, that Christians should "withhold the gospel from Jews." Christianity is inherently evangelistic, and Christians have no choice but to share their understanding of the grace of God revealed for all in Jesus Christ. At the same time, Christians who are scripturally serious must share St. Paul's understanding of the "mystery" of continuing Judaism, and his certainty that God has not reneged on his promise to the children of Abraham (Romans 9-11).

Pawlikowski notes that in the last two decades churches have adopted statements on their theological and practical attitudes toward Judaism. It is time, he says, for Jews to follow suit. "It is vital for Jews to have some concrete experience in writing a consensus document of this kind, if only to appreciate the difficulties Christian groups face [in making such statements]." There is also another reason why Jews should publicly articulate their understanding of Christianity, says Pawlikowski. "Jews cannot continue critiquing the churches' theological approach to Judaism without an equal opportunity for Christians to do the same with a Jewish statement."

Rabbi Irving Greenberg, responding to Pawlikowski in the same issue, endorses, albeit somewhat tepidly, aspects of his challenge. In a world of free communication and open encounters, Greenberg notes, Jews cannot live in isolation. "In this circumstance, religions that cannot do justice to the value of other faiths will be less and less credible to their own believers." Jews should know more about Christianity, he proposes, if only for reasons of self-defense. "Losses of loyalty and credibility for Judaism are highest among Jews who live in settings which are heavily exposed to alternative lifestyles, religions, and cultural systems." There is, however, a regrettable tone of truculence in the response to Pawlikowski's challenge. "Given the history of the two faiths' relationship," Greenberg declares, "Jews owe nothing to Christianity." It is a statement that does not bear close examination, and certainly does not advance the deeper engagement between Judaism and Christianity that Greenberg says he favors.

Because of his standing in the Jewish-Christian dialogue and his keen appreciation of its nuances and tensions, Pawlikowski's challenge should be a continuing point of reference. "I believe," he writes, "we are living in an era with monumental possibilities for permanently reshaping the historic relationship between Jews and Christians, and paving the way for an outreach by both to peoples of other faiths. Neither Christians nor Jews can afford to ignore the opportunity."

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WALKING AWAY FROM COMMITMENT

A reporter friend of ours has just read Shelby Steele's *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (Norton). The reporter is white, and he felt guilty about agreeing with the book so thoroughly. Steele is black, and his argument is that racial victimization games are, in the name of civil rights, turning young blacks into moral rip-off artists, and locking them into permanent inferiority of both feeling and social station. Steele's text is from Frederick Douglass, who wrote in 1848: "What we, the colored people, want is *character*, and this nobody can give us. It is a thing we must get for ourselves. . . . It is gained by toil—hard toil. Neither the sympathy nor the generosity of our friends can give it to us. . . . It is attainable; but we must attain it, and attain it each for himself. I cannot for you, and you cannot for me." The title of the book is, of course, from the "dream" of Martin Luther King, Jr. that one day people would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

So why was our reporter friend so troubled? "All of us who came up as good liberals knew that liberalism was measured, above all, by our commitment to racial justice. *We* were responsible for what was wrong, and *we* were responsible for setting it right. But now, if blacks like Steele and [Glenn] Loury and [Stanley] Crouch are right, we're supposed to walk away from that commitment. There's nothing we can do, there's nothing we should do; in fact, we *should* do nothing. So it turns out Pat Moynihan was right twenty years ago when he called for benign neglect. It turns out the racists are right when they say that blacks are responsible for the problems of blacks."

The anguish of this friend, unlike the anguish of some "good liberals," is not feigned. He had marched, he had picketed, he had campaigned, he had voted the right way. He had, as they say, paid his dues. Talk about the black need for character is fine, but acting on the moral obligation that whites owe to blacks is part of *his* character. It would be cynical to say that he needs to feel that he owes blacks, with the concomitant assumption that their well-being is somehow dependent upon him. The reality is that commitment to helping blacks is part of his character. Fortunately, he and thousands of other white Americans need not "walk away from" that commitment.

The older form of commitment, the commitment that is discharged by political support for policies aimed at achieving "racial justice," may now be outdated and counterproductive. Commitment in the form of personal involvement, however, has never been more urgent. The key reality of the black underclass is one of "radical isolation" (William Julius Wilson) from the rest of the society, including the two-thirds of the black population that is not in the underclass. Now is the time for churches, black and white, to explore new patterns of mutual instruction and support. There are numerous programs through which people can invite poor children into their homes for a time, getting them out of the ghetto. For a few children the experience can generate resentment at social inequities. For the great majority, it shows them another world to which they can aspire.

To agree on the priority of character formation does not mean walking away from concern about race and poverty. If antipoverty programs are about helping people get out of poverty, the most effective antipoverty program in America today is the parochial school. Most of them are Roman Catholic, some are Lutheran. By way of sharpest contrast, in our urban areas, less than 20 percent of the students in the public schools will leave school as functional literates. The majority are headed for joblessness, welfare, drugs, crime, and jail. On the other hand, more than 90 percent of the students in parochial schools, drawn from the same underclass population, go on to college or other advanced training. The cost per student in parochial schools is usually less than half the cost in public schools. Study after study over the last twenty years has demonstrated the dramatic disparity between government-run education and schools of choice.

People of commitment can give scholarships to enable more students to choose a quality education. Most parochial schools have sponsorship programs in which adults can become big brothers or big sisters, staying in regular and supportive contact with particular students. And, if the felt need is to do something political as well, there is ample opportunity for activism in moving public policy toward making existing public schools more accountable and in multiplying the educational alternatives available to the poor. Instruments such as vouchers or tuition tax credits can strengthen the financially strapped parochial schools, and give poor parents the educational choices now enjoyed by those who are financially better off.

In sum, our reporter friend and those like him should not feel guilty about agreeing with Steele, Loury, Crouch, and other writers who are waking us up to the disastrous consequences of policies promoted under the banner of "civil rights." If one really wants to help, and not simply indulge the feelings of "commitment to racial justice" associated with yesteryear's liberalism, waking up will not mean walking away.

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Keeping Tabs

Every once in a while there is a noteworthy wiggle on the religious survey charts, but, to the consternation of those who look for dramatic declines or revivals, the story continues to be one of continuity. George Gallup caught one change of interest. In response to the question "Would you say you have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, or not?" a growing number of Americans say they have. Twelve years ago 60 percent said yes, two years ago it was 66 percent, and now it is 74 percent. The rise is pretty much across the board in terms of gender, age, education, income, etc. Except that only 58 percent of blacks say yes, which is odd, since blacks rate higher than whites on some "religiousness" scales.

Eighty-two percent of Protestants, 95 percent of respondents who say they have been born again, and 72 percent of Catholics say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. It all depends upon the question, of course. Talk about having made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ has, in this century, been associated with evangelical and revivalist religion. The rise in the number of people who are comfortable with that language may indicate not so much an increase in Christian devotion as an increase in evangelical presence and respectability in American life.

The indefatigable Gallup, who directs the important work of Princeton Religion Research Center, reports that other indices are fairly steady. Through the seventies and eighties, as at present, 40 percent of Americans say they attended church or synagogue in the last seven days. That figure went up to 46 percent in the late fifties, during the "religion boom" of the Eisenhower years. In the West only 28 percent say they attended services in the previous week. Church or synagogue services, that is. Gallup didn't ask about covens, seances, and channeling sessions.

In another finding, 76 percent of teenagers say that "having a deep religious faith" is very important or somewhat important. But that's beat out by "being well educated," "working for peace," "getting married," "having children," and "having lots of money." In short, it seems that almost everything is very important to teenagers. Except for "being famous," which only 16 percent rate as very important. That's one thing that the kids probably recognize can't be controlled, so why want it very badly? The really big winner among teenagers, however, is "having personal peace and happiness." Ninety-eight percent say that is very important or somewhat important. We would like to meet the respondents who said that having personal peace and happiness is "not very important." One might find some real Christians there.

FT

Pity the Unliberated

Give a little boy a hammer, it is said, and he will discover that the whole world needs hammering. Give people a cause, and they'll discover that the whole world is best viewed through its spectacles. In this case the cause is feminism and the way developments in the Gulf are reported from that angle. Here is what seems like the 1,000th story in the *New York Times* about our wonderful women in the Gulf and the poor unliberated women of Saudi Arabia who must surely envy them.

We are told that about 10 percent of U.S. troops in the Middle East are women, including a Major Fisher. "When ordered to Saudi Arabia, she had two days to get ready, she said. Her husband was away on business but got back just in time for a hurried one-hour farewell at the terminal. Saying goodbye to her children was perhaps harder. 'My ten-year-old son knew something was wrong,' she said. 'I told him there was a crisis and I had to go—that it was my job.' " The story does not say whether her children understood that she was leaving them, perhaps not to come back, because she had something more important to do. Living with the troops in the desert has been an education. " 'I looked over and saw a guy taking a shower in the stall next to me,' Major Fisher recalled. 'We just laughed. You can't get hung up about it. You've got a job to do.' "

"Major Fisher speculated that a kind of sexual revolution would come to Saudi Arabia too, even if slowly. 'If I were a Saudi woman I'd look at the American women here and ask "Why can she do this and I can't?" ' " One can just hear the envious Saudi woman wondering to herself, "Why can she be ordered to leave her husband and children and go thousands of miles away to fight a war and take showers with men and maybe get killed, and I can't?" The little Fisher boy was right. There is something wrong here.

FT

While We're At It

■ There was editorial hustling here to get in at the last minute the proper identification of William Bennett to accompany his article on drugs and morality (December 1990). But we managed to have it noted that he had resigned as drug czar. The issue barely hit the newsstands, however, before it was announced that Bill Bennett had been appointed chairman of the Republican National Committee. And now he's not. It's not easy to keep current when you're writing about this fellow. The story of the announcement in the *Times* noted that Bennett is

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"controversial views." Among the examples listed is that "he has said there are too many abortions in America." Now what do you suppose might be a noncontroversial view on this matter? That there are not enough abortions? That 1.6 million abortions per year is just right? Those who earnestly desire to avoid controversy need to know.

■ With a frequency that surprises us, although perhaps it shouldn't, we are asked to recommend a solid introduction to the teaching and history of Christianity. Of course there are hundreds of books that might serve, but one rather obvious resource should not be overlooked—the current edition (Fifteenth) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* . The articles on "Christianity" and "Jesus," largely written by Jaroslav Pelikan of Yale, are more informative, readable, and authoritative than a good many book-length treatments that come to mind. We only mention it because today we were asked again.

■ Richard Vigilante is writing in *National Review* about the changing forms of liberalism and conservatism, and the last line makes this one worth citing: "The future of conservatism seems to lie in a concern for the state not of the deficit, or of the defense budget, but of the culture." No argument there. It's what we've been saying all along, and it's as true of liberalism as it is of conservatism. Vigilante continues: "Philistines, bullies, prudes, and fops; the New Agers, the new racists, the new Puritans, and the new class all but strangle us with their new rules on what we can say and think in polite society." Then this: "America desperately needs a bonfire of the pieties." Great line, that, although we would warmly recommend some discriminations between pieties.

■ If you are a Baptist, read this book. Or a Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Whatever. Roman Catholics also should read *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (Crossroad). Thomas Day is writing about the culture of American Christianity and what it does to our understanding of God, self, and community—as reflected in the way Christians worship. Scathingly witty and relentlessly honest, *Why Catholics Can't Sing* is a bracing tonic for those who have just about given up on remedying the cultural debasement of the contemporary church. Day's necessary polemic is not only against "bad taste," but also bad theology and bad ethics. When the community is so debilitated at prayer, it is little wonder that its witness in public life is weak and confused. Be assured, you don't have to be Catholic to enjoy, and learn from, *Why Catholics Can't Sing.*

■ We came across this interview by North American liberationist Jim Wallis with Latin American liberationist Jon Sobrino. The title is, "God's Creation is in Very Poor Shape." Acting on the principle that it is wise to quit while you can still agree, we didn't read it.

■ About twenty-five children, ages six to twelve, sing to a large crowd gathered at New York's city hall. They are the "Homicide Victims Chorale," made up of children whose parents or siblings were killed in the city's approximately two thousand homicides last year. The welfare workers who organized the Victims Chorale no doubt feel good about what they're doing. They say the children are being given a chance to sing out their sorrow and anger, while also learning at an early age to protest against injustice. Well, maybe. But there is something macabre about a Victims Chorale. And something cruel, no doubt unintentionally cruel, about impressing upon a young child that his public identity is that of victim. Young boys and girls taught to think of themselves as victims have been victimized twice over.

■ One of the livelier publications around is *Ultimate Issues,* edited by Dennis Prager from a Jewishly serious perspective. A recent issue is devoted to the hot and convoluted debates surrounding homosexuality and current gay activisms. In surveying the relevant literature, Mr. Prager is struck by how much emphasis is placed on the allegedly universal acceptance of homosexuality in human history. Well, *almost* universal, since the point repeatedly made by those sympathetic to homosexuality is that there is something very odd about Jewish-Christian culture and its hangups with homoerotic love. Prager agrees that that is exactly the point. Jewish-Christian rejection of homosexuality cannot be, as some claim, a matter of "cultural conditioning," since on this question it is obvious that Jews and Christians made such a determined, and successful, effort to resist the influence of surrounding cultures. There has to be some other explanation. There is. We cannot do Prager's argument justice here, but readers who are weary of the propaganda of gay promotion and gay bashing alike might write for this issue of *Ultimate Issues.* (Send $5 to 6020 Washington Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232.)

■ Plugs such as this one are not our usual thing. But when recommendations come with such enthusiasm, and from authorities that we dare not ignore, an exception seems to be in order. The group is called Gloriae Dei Cantores (Singers to the Glory of God) and is based in Massachusetts. Ranging in age from twenty-one to sixty, they have toured the world singing everything from Gregorian chant to Bornianskv. Before that empire went into its final throes, they sang in the Soviet Union (and in Russian) religious works that had not been heard for seventy years. They are, we are assured, sensational. This March they are touring the Eastern seaboard from Washington, D.C. to Toronto. The New York concert is at Town Hall on March 7. For other dates, write Mrs. William Kanaga, 129 Rock Harbor Rd,

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Orleans, MA 02653, or call (508) 255-8361.

■ "Bible prophecy" is very big these days. The impending new millennium, combined with events in the Middle East, has sent the predictions market soaring, or so we are told. We only get these mailings from time to time. Here's one urging us to subscribe to a monthly called "The Omega-Letter." "IT'S LIKE HAVING A BOOK ON BIBLE PROPHECY THAT AUTOMATICALLY UPDATES ITSELF EVERY SINGLE MONTH!" It seems that, among other things, some conspiracy of computer masters has already established a world government, setting the stage for the very last days. Readers of The Omega-Letter, we are told, "HAVE FRONT ROW SEATS TO THOSE VERY EVENTS THAT WILL CULMINATE IN THE SOON RETURN OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST!" It was with some relief that we noted that there is a special reduced rate for three-year subscriptions. We decided to put off subscribing for a while. Maybe we'll think about it again when the end is "REAL SOON!" Like when the publisher will only take your money one month at a time. There was, however, one very attractive promise: "ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND BIBLE PROPHECY, THE EVENING NEWS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME." Almost we were persuaded.

■ Kenneth Myers was editor of *This World*, the predecessor publication to this journal, and he has written a book that we have been remiss in bringing to your attention. *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture* is in paperback from Crossway publishers. The problem with the sleazier aspects of pop culture, says Myers, is not just the content but the sensibilities that it encourages and the sensibilities it destroys. Worse, some Christians (as in "Christian Rock") think they are coopting pop culture when, in fact, they are being coopted by it. Myers knows there is a close connection between aesthetic and moral judgments, and he has a lot of both. He is almost always right, no offense intended to the dolts who disagree.

■ The United Church of Canada, created in 1925 by a merger of denominational uncertainties, has been in the doldrums for a long time. Now its highest council has reaffirmed a 1988 decision to allow homosexuals to be ordained, and some are predicting that 80,000 or more additional members may defect. The moderator of the UCC, the Rev. Walter Farquharson, is worried and says he has a plan to address the spreading disaffection. Ministers, he says, should "invite such members back for a potluck supper, where instead of dealing with the issue in a confrontational way, they're able to deal with it in a very human way." Presumably it's hard to get worked up about theology and ethics over a potluck supper. We may have no beliefs in common about God, Bible, and Christian morality, but what's a church for if we can't still have a good time together?

Sources: On saying no to abortion and fetal research, *Christianity Today*, November 19,1990. On anti-Catholicism, *TV Guide*, October 6-12, 1990. On brutality against Operation Rescue, *Christianity Today*, September 10, 1990. On Jewish-Christian dialogue, *Moment*, August 1990. Statistics on religious faith, *PRRC emerging trends*, June 1990. On women soldiers, *New York Times*, September 25, 1990. On William Bennett's controversial views, *New York Times*, November 19,1990. Vigilante on liberalism and conservatism in *National Review*, November 19, 1990. "God's Creation is in Very Poor Shape" in *Lutheran World Information*, November 8, 1990. On the Homicide Victims Chorale, *New York Times*, November 22,1990. On the United Church of Canada, *Insight*, September 10, 1990.

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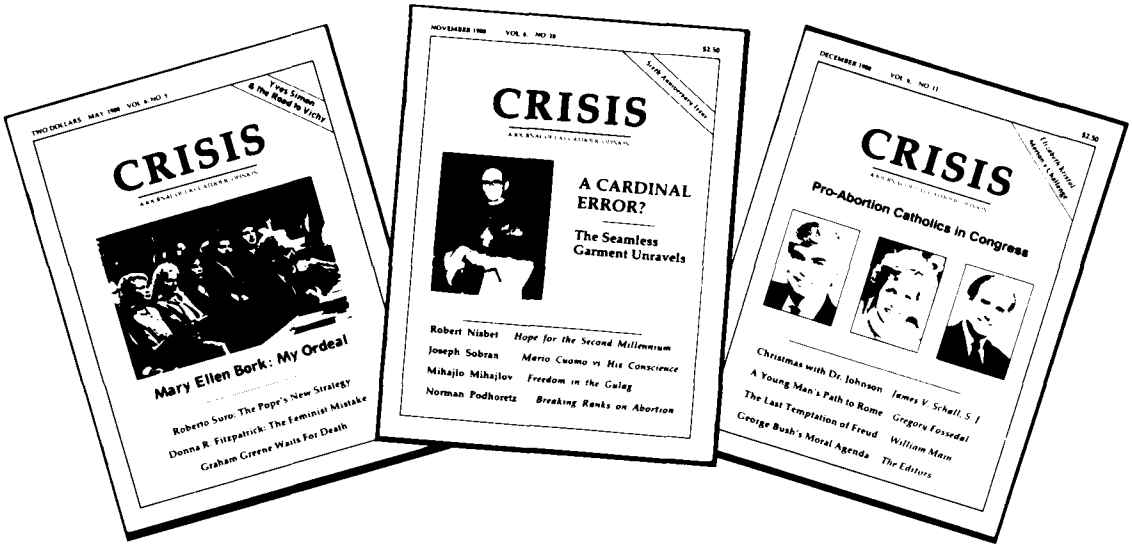
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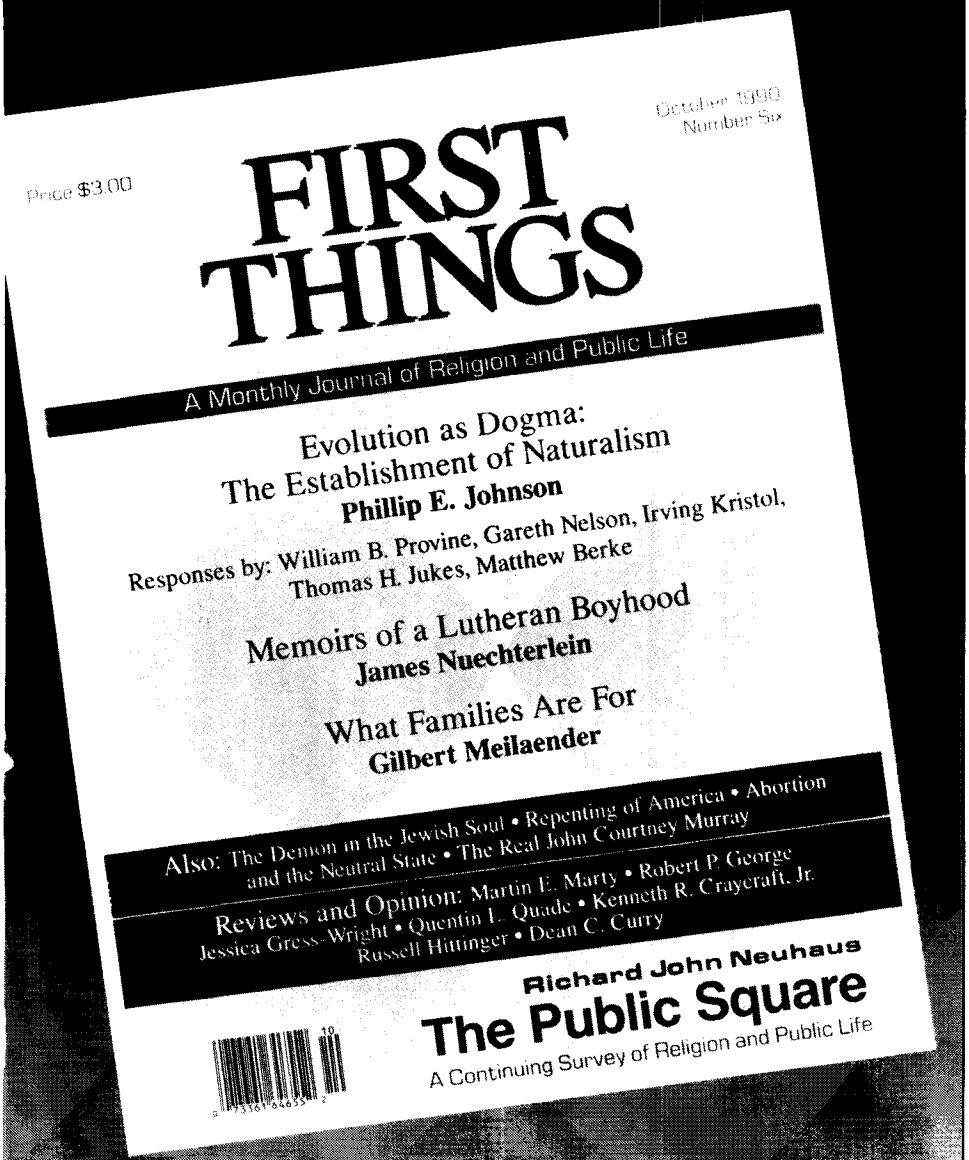
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